





MEDITATIONS

ON

LIFE, DEATH, AND ETERNITY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF
ZSCHOKKE

BY

FREDERICA ROWAN.



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To

H. R. H. THE PRINCESS LOUISE OF HESSE,

PRINCESS ALICE OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND,

WHOSE YOUNG LIFE

HAS ALREADY GIVEN EVIDENCE OF

THE RELIGIOUS EARNESTNESS AND SINCERITY

INCULCATED IN THESE MEDITATIONS,

This Translation

IS, WITH THE GRACIOUS PERMISSION OF HER ROYAL HIGHNESS,

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THE TRANSLATOR.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

THE present edition of Zschokke's *Meditations* is a reissue of two volumes which appeared after the death of Prince Albert in England, and were then reprinted in this country. A favorite book with the Prince Consort was the well-known German work, *Stunden der Andacht*, generally ascribed to Zschokke. Some of these *Meditations* were frequently read by him, as though he had a presentiment of his early death. After that sad event the book naturally became more than ever endeared to the Queen, who solaced herself by making a selection of the greater favorites; these she employed Miss Rowan to translate, and had them printed in a volume, of which a small number of copies were circulated, with a notice that the *Meditations* had "been selected for translation by one to whom, in deep and overwhelming sorrow, they had proved a source of comfort and edification." As the volume is one so eminently calculated to answer this end, it was evident that a much wider circulation was desirable than at first contemplated, and accordingly Her Majesty was pleased to give her permission to that effect.

The publication of the work under the title of *Meditations on Death and Eternity*, both in England and America showed it to be so acceptable that Miss Rowan translated other portions of *Stunden der Andacht*, and they were published in a companion volume, entitled *Meditations on Life and its Religious Duties*, the first chapter being also the first chapter in the original German work. These two volumes have been for some time out of print in America, and are now reissued in a single volume, under the title of *Meditations on Life, Death, and Eternity*. No attempt has been made to reconstruct the two volumes into agreement with the order of *Stunden der Andacht*, but the natural order has been adopted of making Miss Rowan's second compilation precede the first. The Dedication prefaced to the *Meditations on Life and its Religious Duties* is retained, and placed in the front of this volume.

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MEDITATIONS
ON
LIFE AND ITS RELIGIOUS DUTIES.



MEDITATIONS.

REFLECTIONS ON THE OPENING OF A NEW YEAR.

Thousands have fallen at my side,
Struck by the hand of Death; yet still
I stand; still feel with joy the tide
Of fresh life through my being thrill.
Who am I? Wherefore dost Thou spare?
Why thus, O God, my fate direct?
Why guard me with such wondrous care,
And with thy tender thought protect?

A careless dweller on thine earth,
I, Lord, am nothing, — Thou art all!
O make my future life more worth,
Throw o'er the past a covering pall.
This year I'll consecrate to Thee, —
In all things seek thy will to know,
Righteousness all my joy shall be,
The good seed only will I sow.

Be what thou wilt, O untried year!
God guardeth me, and all I love.
Shall future days bring peril near?
Shall all my hours grief-laden prove?
Or shall my better star's mild ray
Shine forth, and fortune's gifts o'erflow?
Alike to me! Care, doubt, away!
Whate'er is best will God bestow.

(PHILIPP. iv. 4-7.)

THE opening of a new year is a solemn epoch to all of us; it is, as it were, a day consecrated to our silent hopes, our most secret wishes. Here the solemn peals of the early morning bells announce the

inauguration of a new period of time ; there the sound of trumpets and bassoons, and sacred hymns, herald in the first morning of the year. Merry troops of girls and boys greet it with joyous shouts. Friends and acquaintances interchange cordial wishes ; pious children pray with greater fervor for the welfare of their benefactors, nations for that of their rulers.

So to all the transition from one year to another is of solemn import : to the sovereign on his throne, as to the beggar in his hovel ; to the industrious father of a family in the midst of his labors, as to the mother in the midst of her children ; to the old man in his easy-chair, as to the youth, who, full of hopes and expectations, longs to launch himself into the stormy world.

Behind us lies our past life, like a long dream ; before us the future, like an unknown country, veiled in impenetrable mists. Gloomy minds are filled with melancholy forebodings, cheerful hearts with bright hopes. Each one looks forward to what the next days or months may bring ; each one would fain catch a glimpse of the fate which lies concealed in the dim future, as the seed lies germinating in the dark bosom of the wintry earth.

Each one resumes in the new year his usual task, and sketches out his plans and projects with indefinite fears and expectations.

The Christian also commences a new course ; he also is filled with fears and hopes. But with what sentiments does he go forth to encounter, at the beginning of a new year, the mysterious future, and his unknown fate ? He seeks a short interval of solitude, in which his soul may possess itself. He lifts up his

spirit in fervent prayer to the Almighty Father, and his all-embracing love, and his lips stammer forth the thanks of his heart. He says: "I am not worthy of the infinite mercy and love which Thou hast lavished upon me. What I am, and what I possess, I owe to Thee! Thou hast guided me through a thousand dangers, many of which were not even known to me. Thou wert present when my sorrows and tribulations were greatest. Thou hast watched over me and mine while we slept. Thy warning hand has made itself felt whenever we have erred. Whatever has befallen me in the past year, I know it was for my good; and even if there be things, the bearing of which upon my true welfare I cannot as yet discover, I am convinced that in the future I shall see it more clearly. For the holy order according to which Thou rulest the world is wise and wonderful, and directed towards the highest happiness of those whom it has pleased Thee to create. Yea, I also belong to this holy order of the universe, which is eternal and indestructible as Thou art. I, also, am counted by Thee as a member of it; and even the misfortunes that have befallen me, even those that I have not brought down upon myself by my own imprudence, which I had no power to ward off, which have lacerated my heart, and caused it to bleed, — even these have been included in the order of thy world from all eternity. And whatsoever Thou doest, is well done!"

O Lord, my God, whose mercy is inexhaustible! O Father! Father, full of unutterable goodness, do not abandon me! Do not abandon me or those who belong to me! Do not abandon us, even when we err! For though thy children go astray, they ever turn back weeping, to throw themselves on thy mercy.

Yea, O Lord, my God, Thou hast helped me so far, and Thou wilt help me farther. I look up to Thee with unswerving confidence. As a feeble child clings, full of love and trust, to mother and father, so I cling to Thee. I will follow the teachings of thy holy Son, of my Saviour Jesus Christ, who brought us thy word, and then await with calm resignation whatever Thou mayst have ordained for me and my dear ones in future years.

I trust in Thee, and therefore I ask naught of Thee. Thou alone seest what is good for me and mine, and Thou wilt give and withhold what Thou deemest conducive to our welfare.

Yet, O Omniscient God, Thou knowest that many ardent wishes agitate my heart, — many insignificant wishes, which I would disclose to no one, for fear of being misjudged; and others which I would fain utter aloud with burning tears, crying, Oh, may they be fulfilled! Thou knowest them, Father, though I dare not name them to Thee; yet my highest happiness depends upon their fulfillment.

Nay, nay! what words have I spoken? Am I, then, wiser than the All-wise? Can I know beforehand what will constitute my future happiness, — I, who cannot even tell what will befall me the next moment of my life? Nay, nay, all-wise and loving Father, I can but stammer forth my wishes like an ignorant child; and Thou wilt fulfill those which Thou knowest will be truly beneficial to me. Into thy faithful, fatherly keeping I resign myself, and all those who are dear to my heart. We belong to thee; Thou alone art our God.

Well, then, O my heart, discard all useless cares, all vain hopes, and await with calm trust the gifts of

the beneficent Providence that watches over thee and thine. Be not too hopeful, neither too anxious, as regards the future. Either may prove injurious to thee, and may exercise a baneful influence on the plans and projects thou mayst entertain.

Be not too hopeful! Nothing is more likely to mislead a man than that over-confident expectation of success which will allow him to harbor no doubt as to the realization of what he desires, because it has some probability in its favor. This leads him to make all his arrangements precipitately; and, blinded by his hopes, he lets himself be seduced into foolish undertakings. What the heart desires, it trusts will be realized, forgetting how often it has been disappointed in its expectations.

Be not too hopeful, lest, were hope to fail, thou shouldst lose courage, and sink into despondency. In hoping too confidently, thou art only preparing for thyself bitter moments, which thou mightst have avoided. Disappointed hopes ever leave a sting behind, which makes us unjust to our fellow-men, and even rebellious against Providence. Yet we alone are to blame for having given ourselves up to idle dreams, and to building castles in the air.

Hope not too confidently! For this keeps thee unprepared for many a misfortune that may possibly befall thee. He who feeds his mind upon expectations of too bright a character renders it effeminate and powerless to cope with the storms that may burst forth unexpectedly from all sides. The Christian sage walks forward to meet the future, prepared for all things, armed with calm courage and resignation, as the brave soldier marches forward to meet an unknown enemy. With his eyes fixed on heaven,

the Christian receives evil, like good, gratefully, as coming from the hand of the Eternal Ruler of the universe. Whether the next month is to bring him a wreath of unlooked-for joys or a coffin wherein one most dear to him lies dead, he awaits both alike with Christian fortitude.

Hope confidently for those joys only which thou preparest for thyself through the virtue and uprightness of thy life. Such hope will seldom be disappointed. The virtues which thou mayst exercise are sure to bring thee joy, even in this world. The evil habits, the faults of character, which thou mayst conquer, will reconcile those to thee who now perhaps look upon thee with contempt and detestation. The good qualities which thou mayst acquire — thy cordial manners, thy disinterested desire to be of use to others, thy endeavor always to say as much good of others as thou canst, thy zeal in attending to the business intrusted to thee, thy repugnance to, and withdrawal from, all impure things — will gain for thee the love of those who now regard thee with indifference. After all, what constitutes the most lasting happiness of man? Self-contentment, and the consequent esteem and friendship of every good person. If thou be not happy, who hinders thee from being so? Why wilt thou not divest thyself of faults of which thou art fully conscious, which repel other men, and by which thou despoilest thyself of peace of mind, of the calm peace of God? Why dost thou foolishly look to others for a happiness which thou canst rear most lastingly with thine own hands? Perhaps thou findest it too difficult to reform; thou hast not the courage to begin. Well, then, I can no longer feel pity for thee; thou lackest the resolution to be happy.

Hope only for so much consideration and well-being as thou canst acquire by thine own industry and exertions. Count only upon thyself and upon God's blessing ; count not on the assistance of other men, on happy chances, on blind accidents, such as an unexpected inheritance, or a prize in the lottery, that may bestow riches upon thee. The more completely a man relies upon himself alone, the less dependent he is on the favors of others : the greater, freer, nobler, he is, and the more capable of all that is good. Why, then, dost thou wish for increased consideration in the eyes of others, or for the acquisition of wealth ? Is it not because to possess these would flatter thy vanity ? Unworthy man ! to gratify thy secret pride, thou wouldst have God to perform miracles, and to regulate anew the order of the world ! He who cannot be content and happy with that which he is able to acquire by his own labor and cheerful industry, verily, he is not worthy of greater gifts of fortune !

Hope only for so much satisfaction in the world as thou mayst prepare for thyself by thine own prudent conduct in life. I must ever refer thee to thyself. Thou must be the creator of thine own happiness ; for this purpose God has endowed thee with reason and understanding.

Prudently avoid all dangerous and foolhardy undertakings ; place thy household on a prudent footing ; choose thy friends with prudence ; avail thyself prudently and zealously of every opportunity of honestly extending and improving thy business ; be prudent in thy relations with people of different views from thine own, and of different rank, and thou wilt save thyself many anxious hours, and build for thyself a peaceful paradise within the circle in which

thou livest and workest, which will bestow far higher happiness than all the fleeting images of mere hope.

Look upon time as an unsown field, in which neither fortune nor misfortune will spring up of itself. Thou must first with thine own hands till the ground and sow the seed. And as thou sowest thou shalt reap. In this field pray, in this field labor, and God's blessing will attend thy exertions.

If, then, an unexpected piece of good luck, or an unhopèd-for joy fall to thy lot, it will but surprise thee the more agreeably, and make thee the happier. Ah, how bountiful is God ! how overflowing his goodness ! In future years also he will send thee joys which thou hast neither looked for nor prayed for.

Be not over anxious ! The fear of future evils is in itself the greatest of evils. Thou sufferest more from thy fears than thou art likely to suffer from misfortunes when they do come upon thee. Thou poisonest therewith thy health, and killest many a little joy, which may be blooming for thee in the present. Fear of the future is in many minds nothing but a bad habit. It is a gratification to them to be always complaining, and to conjure up anxieties in connection with every subject. They inflict unnecessary tortures upon themselves, and, like madmen, destroy the real joys of the present.

Be not over-anxious ! It deprives thee of all courage, and thy very cowardice will often lead thee into trouble. Do not flatter thyself that thy anxieties and cares are the result of prudent forethought ; for the prudent man is calm in mind, he enjoys with composure the pleasurable present, holds growing cares in check by hopes of better things in future ; and when at last the threatened hour of misfortune

comes, he meets it with resolute action, calculated to diminish or to conquer it. The sailor, borne on the billows of the ocean, rejoices with tranquil mind in the favorable wind and the cheerful sunshine. Would it be better that he should be fearing storms, and looking forward to shipwreck, while everything is calm around him? But the sky becomes overcast, a raging wind lashes the ocean into fury, rends the sails of his ship, and threatens him with terrible destruction. Fear and cowardice would only accelerate his ruin. But trusting in God, who is with him even in the midst of storms on the solitary waters, the sailor gathers up his waning strength, hastens to every point where his help is most needed, wrestles with wind and waves, and by his resoluteness and prudence saves himself from the danger.

Be not over-anxious! But, if hitherto thou hast not been quite happy, reflect that things are ever changing. If thy present position be a disconsolate one, take courage, for surely it will not ever remain the same. Hast thou not yet learnt to know from thine own experience the everchanging character of things? If darkness reign around thee at present, be comforted, in a few days all will be brighter; here below misfortune is as little lasting as happiness. Why should we despair because one sun sets? Will not a new morn dawn for us beyond the night? Take a full survey of thy present painful position, reflect on thy tribulations, and then say whether thou hast lost all! Nay! And even hadst thou lost all else, thou hast not lost God? Why, therefore despair? (Hebrews xiii. 5, 6.)

Be not over-anxious, for God will be with thee at all times. And should even every hope, every happi-

ness in life be lost to thee, thou wilt still not be quite impoverished, for the inexhaustible source of every joy, of every good gift, the loving kindness of God, has not deserted the world. If the hand of death have robbed thee of a treasure, of one of the cherished ones of thy heart, why shouldst thou forever weep over the grave of the beloved dead? Turn to eternity! Thou art being led by the hand of God towards the dear one whom thou hast lost here below. Is it human injustice that has inflicted injury on thee, or is it the cruelty of unfeeling souls, or is it the havoc of war that has deprived thee of part, or perhaps the whole, of thy fortune? Take courage and look up, for retributive justice rules above the stars, and thy tears also have been counted.

Be not over-anxious, but consider that the trials that fell upon thee in the past year, and which are now depressing thy spirit and depriving thee of all hope in better days, — consider that they were but a test of thy Christian faith, a test, but also a warning to thee how to conduct thyself in future troubles. Thou art created for another world, and not alone for this fleeting dream of earthly life. It is only through matured virtues, through tried wisdom, through greatness of soul, that thou canst become a worthy denizen of a better world. Evils exist, that in enduring them and in struggling with them we may exercise and strengthen our souls. (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.) Thou hast suffered? Well, then, show me what thou hast learnt in the school of suffering? Hast thou become a better man or woman? If so, then thou wilt look forward without fear to the future and to the losses it may bring. Thou wilt look up to heaven and exclaim, with joyful trust: “THE

LORD GIVETH AND THE LORD TAKETH AWAY,
GLORY BE TO HIS NAME!"

Fear no evil but such as thou hast brought upon thyself by thine own fault! There is nothing man has to dread so much as his own errors, his own imprudence, his own passions. Therefore fear not the future, but fear thyself. The future is sent by God, but by far the greater number of misfortunes and troubles are brought on by man himself. Live a Christian life, and whatever may befall thee, thou wilt lead a happy life!

Fear naught if thou hast no reason to fear thyself! Lift thyself out of thy present painful and depressing position with manly, Christian resolution. Take into account all circumstances, reflect upon the best means of extricating thyself; brace up thy courage to apply them with all thy might, and to the best of thy understanding. And when thy strength faileth, when thou canst do no more, God will do the rest!

Yea, Thou wilt help, divine Father, Thou who providedst for the lowliest worm in the dust. Full of trust I will lean upon thee, and whatever may befall me in this new year, nothing shall turn me away from Thee, or destroy my confidence in the Holy Word of thy Son, Jesus Christ! What terrors can the future have for me when I know Thou art there? What loss can dishearten me as long as I do not lose Thee?

I will walk in thy sight in the year that lies before me, a better, wiser, more religious man than in the past, and with the new year I will begin a new life. Whatever trouble, whatever sacrifices it may cost me, I am determined to conquer my faults, and the vicious tendencies which are ruining me in secret.

And — should I not survive to the end of the year,

should it prove my last — ah, may then not only the tears of friends shed at my grave, but also my own good conscience, bear testimony in my favor before Thee! I will prepare myself for this. Should this prove the year of my death, it will also prove the year of my birth into a better world. May I die smiling in full trust in Thee, my God, and enter smiling into that eternity in which new bliss awaits me in the midst of thy wonderful and infinite creations. Amen!

PROVIDENCE.

Mine is a living faith, — God ne'er will leave me, —
Should even hope's last anchor break, and care
Make pale the glowing hopes that now deceive me,
I'll not despair.

And tread I oft through wintry paths, and dreary,
Where Life's dark night no friendly gleam may share;
His providence shall guide my footsteps weary:
I'll not despair.

(PSALM xxxvii. 5.)

THERE may be hours or weeks of painful experiences, which lay low our strength, which extinguish all our hopes. There are times in which misfortunes gather around us from every side, and which seem to unsettle our deepest and holiest convictions, and even to shake the faith of our souls in Eternal Providence.

We behold with terror malice triumph, and right succumb; we see God-fearing Christians, who have fulfilled their duties modestly, and have done much good in secret, misjudged, scoffed at, slandered, and persecuted, while selfish, cunning, shameless rogues are favored by fortune in all their undertakings, and we ask ourselves, doubtingly, "Is there no Providence watching from above the stars?"

Alas! how many peaceful, pious, happy families have been the victims of the ravages of war. Of what have they been guilty, that their dwelling-places, the homes of every virtue, should be laid in

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ashes? Of what has the father been guilty, that, bowed down with sorrow, he should be destined to see the competence, to attain which he had labored so untiringly, destroyed in a few brief hours? The nights harassed by care, the days of wearying exertion, the sweat of his brow in which he toiled for the welfare of his dear ones, the sorrows and the hopes of a long life, — have they all proved vain? The poor babe, which was the joy of its father's and mother's hearts, — how has he offended, that the greed of robber hordes should precipitate him and his parents into abject poverty, — that he should be doomed through life to struggle with want, and, perhaps, one day, when father and mother are gone, to wander, as a homeless beggar, from cottage to cottage, asking alms of strangers? We shudder at the sight of such unhappy victims, and ask, "Are the children of men left to be the sport of blind and cruel chance, or is our destiny ruled by a malevolent Providence?"

A mother, who refuses to be comforted, is kneeling by the bedside of her dying child. The beloved babe, whom she bore with pain, and whom she reared with tender care, lies, like a withering blossom, before her, and the best joys of her life are fading with him. She raises her tearful eyes to heaven, and then looks down again at the patient, angelic, little sufferer. She kisses his pale cheek: he opens his eyes for the last time, and once more smiles, with sweet innocence, upon his doting mother; once more he stretches out his baby hand to meet hers, as if for a last farewell. Alas, he is loath to part from the faithful maternal heart! But love is torn from love, heart from heart. The mother sinks down insensible by the corpse of her darling. All her sufferings, all

her care, have then proved vain? All the hopes that she cherished, all the tears that she shed, have been cherished and shed in vain? In vain were the prayers which she sent up from her solitude for the recovery of her child? Her lot is, then, unspeakable sorrow here below, and on high no ear to hear her prayers? Sunk in deep dejection, she gazes out into the night of existence, as if she were seeking for help, for salvation, for God; and the sighs that escape her oppressed bosom seem to cry to Heaven, "If there be a Providence, why does he forsake me?"

When devastating floods sweep away the homesteads of numberless families; when earthquakes destroy entire cities, and bury the inhabitants under their ruins; when, as in a neighboring country, mountain-tops fall down, and an entire valley with its population of cheerful and happy shepherds, men, women, and children, dwellers on the spot and strangers within their doors, are interred beneath the huge mass of earth, so that every trace of what has been is lost, — who can remain untouched by fear? Who can refrain from directing an inquiring look toward the mysterious provisions of Eternal Foresight?

Yea, there are moments, hours, weeks, of anguish, which lay low our strength. There may be in our lives a simultaneous concurrence of unhappy circumstances which shake even the faith and trust with which the Christian leans upon Providence. There are times in which everything seems to conspire against our happiness; in which there is nothing we can reckon on with confidence; when unexpected events occur which seem to deprive us of every support. In such dark hours, we are apt to feel as though we were alone in the world, as though God

did not exist for us, as though our weal and our woe were given over to blind chance. The faith in a guiding and wisely-ordaining Providence, which had until then sustained us, now appears to us as a mere illusion of the mind, — as a self-invented anodyne for our sufferings.

But if we reflect calmly, we soon find that Providence has not ceased to guide and to watch, — that the Deity has not vanished from the world, — and we recognize the causes which have in reality led to our want of trust, — which have shaken our faith.

Who can deny that, in most cases, men do not think of Providence until misfortune overtakes them? As long as they live contentedly in the midst of ordinary circumstances, they rarely, if ever, reflect upon God's guidance of the fate of those whom He has called into existence. In like manner, it is only when stretched on a bed of pain that the sick reflect upon the happiness of health. As long as they were well, they disdained to think of illness, and gave themselves up to pleasure, until it was converted into poison. Not until overwhelmed with misfortunes, breaking in from all sides, do men raise their eyes to heaven, and ask, oppressed by suffering, "Does a good Providence watch over me also?" But when thus oppressed and distracted by anxiety, their minds are not in a state to acquire any firm conviction of their living under the constant guidance of a Divine Providence. Their hearts are too much occupied with other matters to allow of their taking a calm and comprehensive view of the events of their lives. They think only of what they fear at the moment, they feel only their present ills; and because their anxious souls are incapable of receiving a sudden con-

viction of the reality of God's wise government of all things, — because they cannot at once call to mind all the evidences of the exalted wisdom of the Divine decrees, which might at other times teach them the truth, they doubt and despond. They see only the mournful present, and discern not the consistency and plan of all existence. They detach the individual circumstances which are weighing heavily upon themselves from the chain of millions of other circumstances and events with which they are intimately linked together, and it is not surprising that weak souls, unaccustomed to contemplate the wondrous government of the world, should mistake a part for the whole, the subordinate for the principal, and that they should believe themselves and the entire universe to be the sport of blind, lifeless chance.

If, in days of greater calm and repose, when we were capable of meditating on higher subjects, we had accustomed ourselves to trace the mysterious hand of the Eternal Ruler of the world in the circumstances of human life, our minds would have acquired a strength and a capacity in this direction which even the greatest misfortunes could not destroy. Did we make it a rule in quiet hours to reflect upon the strange events of our own lives, be they pleasant or sorrowful, we should often find reason to exclaim, with joyful surprise, "Yes, that was the hand of God!" We should see how events, which at the time they occurred we looked upon as irreparable misfortunes, have borne the most blessed fruits in regard to the entire course of our life, or in regard to the welfare of those that belong to us. We should see that if this or another of our most ardent wishes had been fulfilled, we should not have attained our

present position, or the happiness that we actually enjoy. We should be obliged to confess that many things for which we once labored, prayed, and wept in vain, would, had they come to pass, have destroyed our happiness and that of others. We should be forced to admit that many a terrible occurrence, which once produced a disastrous effect on our fortunes, has had the most beneficial effect on our hearts, and that we have to thank the change of mind thus brought about for many of the blessed hours of calm content which we now enjoy.

A Christian, accustomed thus to trace the guidance of human affairs by the all-wise hand of God, will never, whatever may be the misfortunes that befall him in life, lose his faith in the Heavenly Father and in his overruling providence. A Christian thus trained sees no chance or accident in the universe, but everywhere harmony and order. He will, from the depths of his misery, call out to God; but, remembering how often short-sighted man deceives himself in regard to his most ardent wishes, he will add to each prayer for relief, "But, O Lord, not as I will, but as Thou wilt!" He will lean, with a confidence that will strengthen his faltering heart, on the wise decrees of God, in the same manner as a child continues to trust his father, though the latter treat him with seeming severity.

Another source of men's want of faith in an Eternal Providence may be found in the thoughtful presumption with which we arrogate to ourselves the power of judging of the whole course of the universe, while reflecting on the fortunes of a single individual. Senseless mortal, thou presumest to question and to judge that which is to affect the entire tenor of thy

life, and thou canst not even predict with certainty what will be the events of the next hour! Thou questionest the existence of an All-ruling Providence, because thou art incapable of seeing what good may come of some misfortune which has brought ruin upon cities and provinces. Of all the universe, thou knowest but a grain of sand; of all eternity, but one minute. How, then, canst thou know whether that which to thine eyes seems grievous misfortune be really so, or whether it were felt as a misfortune by those whom it befell?

Thou doubttest God's providence because thy limited intellect is incapable of understanding and comprehending it! He who would sit in judgment on the Divine government of the world must himself be God.

We often complain of what to us seems baneful, and the wholesome effects of which, as regards ourselves or the world in general, we are incapable of foreseeing; and, in like manner, we find fault with events which man cannot bring about, and which man cannot prevent.

But many things which appear very terrible to our imaginations are much less so to those whom they befall. When earthquakes swallow up flourishing cities with thousands of happy families, — when a crumbling mountain buries beneath its masses of earth the population of a whole tract of land, — what is it that constitutes the most terrific feature of such an event? The death of these many individuals, their sudden disappearance from the realms of life. Their death? Is death, then, so terrible a misfortune? Is not that last minute, in which the great change takes place, the final goal of every human

being? Do not hundreds and thousands of the myriads of men who are dispersed over the surface of the earth die every day of the year, while, on the other hand, hundreds and thousands are born each day? Would it be a great misfortune to die and be changed at the same moment as all those we hold most dear? Would not many a husband willingly die with his dying wife? Would not many a mother willingly follow the darling child of her heart into the grave? What, then, is the terrible misfortune of which you speak, O skeptics? That thousands vanish in one and the same moment from the earth? But thousands are carried away daily by disease and other causes. That thousands were annihilated while indulging in one and the same dream? But what connection is there between a dream and a so-called misfortune? What God does is well done. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Who hath been his counselor?" (Rom. xi. 33, 34.)

Upon the whole, the principal cause of our want of faith in a Divine Providence is, that we cling too much to that which is merely sensuous and earthly, to those things that concern the wants of the body only, and that we do not make ourselves sufficiently familiar with the thought of the spiritual world, to which our souls belong. To him who, in thought, occupies himself as much with the world of spirit as with his material concerns, death is not a terrible evil. He knows that he lives in God, from whom, in whom, and through whom all things have their being; and in God there is no death. The loss of wealth

cannot, either, be a terrible evil to a Christian, — that is, to a truly wise man. Nay, it is only to those who have lived exclusively in and for their earthly possessions that the loss of these can be the greatest of evils; and how could a Christian, a true sage, live principally for that which he knows is only lent to him, which he cannot retain, which is ever changing? And how should he tremble for that which he knows passes from one death-bed to another, from one heir to another? To him who has not placed his greatest good in that which belongs to the dust, the loss of that which is, and ever will remain, dust, cannot be the greatest of evils. Indeed, as regards many a man, it is *necessary* that he should first grow poor, to enable him to raise his thoughts to his higher happiness, — to the happiness of belonging to God, and of being destined for a more exalted existence.

Frequently, however, it is only a momentary state of dejection that causes us to swerve in our faith, and trust in an Eternal and All-ruling Providence. Thinking only of his own littleness, and forgetting the nameless perfection of God, man sometimes says to himself, “God is too exalted; of what importance to him can be my humble concerns or wishes, or the weal or woe of every insignificant being in the world?”

Of what importance? Art thou not the creature of God? And is not God the Most-high, the All-perfect, who has organized, and who sustains the boundless universe? Whither art thou led by thy despondency? Thou degradest the wisdom and the power of the Deity to a level with the limited understanding and the limited power of a mortal, who is unable to embrace all things. Thou comparest him

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to thyself, poor worm, and measurest the Creator by the standard of the created.

Canst thou believe that He who guideth and ordereth the course of the stars, those myriads of worlds, through the infinite realms of space, — that He who binds even the smallest grain of sand on the globe with invisible bonds, so that it shall not be lost out of the world, — that He who watches over the minute insects, which, in the form of mildew, rejoice in life on the leaf of a rose-bush, which is to them their world, — that He who ruleth the great realm of dead forces with infinite wisdom, — that He would leave uncared for or forget the spirits who, far nobler than any dead forces, are able to praise Him, to call Him by name, and to worship Him? — Forget! What an unworthy idea hast thou formed of the All-perfect One! If he be God, he must be infinitely perfect; and if he be this, then his omniscience, his mercy, his wisdom, and his all-embracing love must be as infinitely perfect. Without his will, as Jesus tells us, no sparrow falls to the ground; and he numbers the hairs of our heads. “Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?” (Matt. vi. 30.)

O Eternal, Unsearchable, All-merciful Being, whom I call Father, who sustaineth all things; who ordereth all things, who guideth all things; Thou rulest my destiny also! Thou hast never, Thou wilt never abandon me, though all else fail me here below. Calmly and confidently I walk in the mysterious path along which thy invisible hand guideth me; for I know it leads to Thee. I honor and worship the wondrous ways of thy providence, and of the eternal

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laws that govern the world of spirits which Thou hast created! — I honor and worship, even when the light of my understanding sufficeth not to compass them! For all things come from Thee, O Infinite and merciful Father! All things come from Thee! All paths lead to Thee.

THE RELIGION OF CHILDHOOD.

The child in spotless innocence
Upon its mother's breast,
Sorrow and sin as yet unknown,
Sinks tranquilly to rest.

Ah, guard this innocence divine !
Keep it unstained and pure, —
A holy temple, at whose shrine
The child may dwell secure.

For all earth's false and specious show,
Wealth, fame, all worldly bliss,
Can ne'er such happiness bestow,
Or yield such peace as this.

Religion ! it is thou alone
Can keep him safe from ill :
O let thy shield be o'er him thrown,
Thy love surround him still.

Then, though temptation may assail,
Or scorn his darts may fling,
Strong in thy strength he shall prevail,
Nor feel repentance' sting.

Thy wondrous care the innocent
Through every fate can guide,
Pure as from God he first was sent,
Home to Jehovah's side.

(LUKE ii. 40-47.)

HAPPY, guileless childhood, image of the innocence of paradise, of Man's life in the garden of Eden ! May religion be the angel which early opens every child's heart to God, which early arms it against the might of the passions, and which leads

its innocence unscathed through the storms of life, through the days of temptation, through the various changes of fate.

In vain would ye keep back the name of the Heavenly Father: every child has a mysterious feeling of his presence, and will from time to time surprise you with questionings about the Creator of heaven and earth; about Him who sends forth the sun and the stars each in its time; whose lightnings shoot through the skies, and whose thunders cause the earth to tremble. — Why would ye withhold from him the name of God and of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as you must either satisfy the child's curiosity, or give it a falsehood for a truth?

It is in vain that with mistaken prudence ye refuse to teach him the name of God; he will hear it from the lips of his playfellows, and then, perhaps, connect it with unworthy conceptions. Father, mother, try to be the first from whose lips your child hears the name of the Heavenly Father, and from whom he learns to know that He is ever present; ye will then have it in your power to instill into the young mind such ideas of the Highest Being as ye approve; you may then help it to form such conceptions as are best suited to its undeveloped power of comprehension and its limited experience. A child has faith in its parents, and in this faith it will believe even what it is not capable of comprehending.

Say to it: "We are indeed thy father and thy mother, but God is our Father, and the Father of all men living. He is invisible to us, yet He is nevertheless everywhere present. Without Him nothing would be in existence; without his love for us no blade of grass, no ear of corn, no fruit would grow,

no flower would bloom, no animal would breathe. Unless He wills it nothing can befall us, either good or evil. Thy mother is indeed a kind and loving friend, but God is kinder than she, and loves thee even better. Thy father knows a great deal, and can do a great many things, but God's knowledge is far greater than that of thy father, and He can do more than ever man could do."

Speak thus to your child, and he will listen with curiosity and astonishment and reverence to what you say of God. He will never lose the remembrance of this Heavenly Father of all; he will divide his love between you and the holy, almighty, and loving, though invisible, Being, who provides for all creatures, and is the friend of the highest as well as of the lowest.

In that hour in which for the first time you speak to your child of God, you lay the germ of religion in his heart. This germ will not fail to take root, and you will one day see it bloom into sweet piety.

Bestow upon your child religion, and you will find the task of educating him greatly facilitated. Religion will help to ennoble his heart when your influence has reached the limit beyond which it cannot pass, and under circumstances that your watchful eye cannot penetrate. You can forbid the child to act wrongly; but the remembrance of the existence of an omniscient God can alone withhold him from thinking evil. You can punish the disobedience which you see; but the disobedience which you do not see can only be reproved by the religious sentiment.

But the thought of God must not be all that the child's religion comprehends; the *spirit* of the Christian religion, the Holy Spirit, must also penetrate the

hearts of the little ones. And the spirit of true Christianity is love, as God himself is love. — It is your duty to open the heart of your child, so that this holy Christian sentiment can enter it. Religious conversations or religious teachings will not alone suffice for this. Your lessons may sink into the memory of the child, but his heart may remain untouched. Your example, your conduct in life, will effect more than all your teachings. Show the child that *you love* it even when you are inflicting punishment for a fault, and he will love you in return. Tell him no falsehoods, and he will blush at untruth and meet you with open candor. Treat all persons with respect, or at least courtesy, and your child will not be repulsive and harsh to others. Hold sacred the property of others, and he will touch nothing that does not belong to him.

Inexperienced youth follows blindly in the footsteps of its educators. Forget not, O parents, that you have mostly yourselves led the way in the path in which your child has lost himself; and that the lovable qualities that adorn him are often but a reflex of your virtues. Therefore, if you would have him honor God and religion, show him in your words and deeds what religion, what fear of God is! Never take in vain the holy name; never show indifference to public worship; never evince inattention and want of reverence when at prayer.

Let your child see you pray. Take care that your prayers, that is, your communions with God, be it in the morning or the evening, or at your mid-day meal, be offered up in his presence with deep-felt devotion. The child cannot as yet pray with you, but demand from him at least the outward signs of reverence to-

wards the Most High. Do not fear to make him thereby a hypocrite. Uncorrupted children cannot be hypocritical; they will soon seek a reason for these outward signs of reverence, which make more impression on them than words. Then explain to them what prayer is. Speak to them as follows: "We grown-up people, as well as you little ones, are the children of the good God. All that we possess we owe to his great love for us. Therefore we thank Him for all the good He bestows upon us. Therefore we implore Him to remain in future also our loving Father, who will provide for us. And when we speak to the invisible God, it is but right that we should do so with the reverential bearing that be-seems children when addressing their Heavenly and Almighty Father."

Not until the child has acquired some settled idea of the Deity, his power, and his love, — not until he is capable of turning spontaneously to God with a prayerful heart, — should you teach him to pray. But this teaching to pray, be it undertaken by father or by mother, let it not be a mere teaching to utter words without thought, but a guidance to true communion with God. Therefore take care that your children do not learn forms of prayer by rote. What children repeat from memory seldom makes any impression on their hearts. It becomes a matter of mere habit, an indifferent daily custom, pharisaical repetitions such as Jesus Christ so warmly reprobated. Guard the integrity of your children's minds and their reverence for God. Forms of prayer learnt as a lesson, and which are above the comprehension of the child, and repeated by him quite mechanically, — which are indeed sometimes even drawn up in a

foreign language, — cannot inspire him with reverence for God, or for religion, but, on the contrary, lead him to contempt for God, and to desecration of religion.

Christian mother, take thy child once a week, say, into thy room, alone with thee. Tell him first how many benefits thou and he have already received from the All-good One, and how many more you still expect from Him. Tell him this in simple words, which, coming from the heart, go to the heart. And when thou hast thus prepared the receptive mind of the child, then, O mother, Christian mother, go down upon thy knees, let thy child kneel beside thee, and pour forth from thy heart a few such words to God as thou knowest would be likely to arise in thy child's mind, such as his heart would speak to God. Thy child will repeat the words, and will understand the supplication; he will surely follow thee in thought, also, and will pray and send up his thanksgiving with childish fervor. This is to teach a child to commune with God. Mother, in such moments the Omnipresent hovers above thee and thy praying child, and his blessing will descend upon you! And thy son or thy daughter will one day pray in secret, as thou hast taught them to pray. They will pray for thee with solemn devotion when illness has prostrated thee, and thou canst no longer lift thine own voice in prayer, and with this same holy devotion they will kneel beside thy grave, praying in heart and truth, not repeating mere empty words.

The child's worship of God in prayer ought to be voluntary, not compulsory. Compulsion destroys the joyfulness with which we ought always to approach God. Compulsion desecrates the most sacred act,

and deprives devotion of its blessed influence on the soul. It is you, O Christian parents, who in the first case have to make your children's hearts receptive for devotion, so that the desire to commune with the Heavenly Father may arise spontaneously in them. By compulsion you may enforce the utterance of empty words, but not the sentiments of love, reverence, and devotion.

For this reason, there is some risk in allowing children in whose hearts the religious sentiment has not been sufficiently awakened to take part in public worship. Their restlessness is apt to disturb the devotion of their elders, and renders it irksome to themselves to remain quietly in the church. The restraint they suffer necessarily inspires them with a dislike of the house of God, which is, however, generally not evinced until they have reached an age when they are at liberty to attend public worship or not, as suits them best. And, ye parents and educators, you cannot but know that the first impressions made on the heart of youth are generally the most lasting, and extend even to old age. Let us therefore be very careful that nothing that is in any way connected with religion make a disagreeable impression on the hearts of children.

It is but too true that the exaggerated, though well-meant, zeal of many parents, who oblige their children at a very early age to attend public worship, has had the most melancholy results, and is in a great measure the cause of so many persons abstaining altogether from taking part in the public worship of any Christian congregation.

Indeed, how can you expect a child to take an interest in listening to the Divine Word, when his

understanding is not sufficiently matured to enable him to comprehend it? How can we expect him to be devout in a place where his natural vivacity finds so many objects to divert his attention?

Nay, let your children's minds and hearts be sufficiently developed to understand the meaning of public worship before you allow them the privilege of appearing in the house of God. Do not force them to an attendance at church, which they ought to desire ardently, and which they will in time come to desire. First make them acquainted with the exalted object of these Christian assemblies, and they will not fail to wish to take part in them. But make them at the same time acquainted with the lukewarmness and levity and indifference of many Christians: so that they may be prepared for and understand the unseemly conduct of many whom they may see at church, and that they may be able to explain to themselves how it is that Christians may be seen praying in temples, who outside of the temple are heard to curse and to swear, and to bear false witness against their neighbor, and are known to commit perjury and to give themselves up to all kinds of vices.

Not until Jesus was twelve years old, and had grown in mind and wisdom (Luke ii. 40-42), was He seen in the temple. He sat among the teachers, full of a holy desire for knowledge, and listened to them and questioned them. In like manner, the day on which you take your children for the first time into the assembly of their fellow-Christians will, and ought to be, one of the most solemn days of their life. The remembrance of it will, in after years, always call forth pleasing emotions.

But long before they pass the threshold of a tem-

ple to take part in public worship, they ought to have become true worshipers of God. It is not the temple, or the altar, that consecrates the heart; it is the heart that consecrates the temple. It is not the church that leads us to religion, but religion that leads us to the church.

Fill the hearts of your children with religious sentiments, and they will one day mix in the public worship of the Christian congregations with deeply moved souls. Previous to this, let the whole world be a temple of God to them, and teach them to attach a religious significance to all the more important events of their lives.

Open to them, O Christian parents, beside the graves of their companions, and of friends dear to them, the first view into eternity; show them the mouldering dust that is being let down into the tomb, and speak to them of the existence of the immortal soul, which belongs not to the dust, but which, spiritual in its nature, is born independent and for infinitude. However imperfect be the conceptions of childhood of the continued life of the soul in a more exalted state beyond the grave, they will suffice to make the hope of immortality take root in the young hearts, and to make the belief in retribution after death grow with their growth. And as they increase in age and understanding, you will find many opportunities of correcting and ennobling their imperfect conceptions.

Let no family festivity take place in your homes, O Christian parents, without in some way connecting it with religion, and thus consecrating it; and do this more especially when celebrating the holy Christmas festival. If you do nothing more than inaugurate

the day with a simple, heartfelt prayer, pronounced while surrounded by your children,—verily such a prayer is a true consecration of the most blessed day.

In this manner the child begins its higher spiritual life, begins to live for God and for eternity. In this manner religion becomes to the young heart an indestructible sanctum, in which it will find peace and repose in the days of manhood and of old age. This religious instruction, adapted to the powers of childhood, ought only to be gradually expanded as the child increases in age and knowledge. At length the time will come when he must be told of Jesus, of his deeds of love, and of his suffering for the human race; but this must not be until the child is quite capable of forming a worthy conception of the greatness of those deeds, and of those sufferings. Lead him not to the foot of the cross on which died the Divine Friend of man, until he is capable of shedding tears of deep emotion, of love, reverence, and gratitude, before he can appreciate the bliss comprised in the thought of being a disciple of Jesus.

Yet beware not to make the religion of childhood a thing of mere emotion, a mere play of the feelings. Do not merely excite the imaginations of the young, and rest contented with making them shed tears at the touching narratives you recount. No doubt such ebullitions of feeling in tender souls are not without their value; but they are evanescent. Their very nature prevents them from being lasting. Point this out to the growing youth and maiden. Make them understand that pious emotions are only the blossoms of religion, and that fruits of their faith will be demanded of them in the form of pious deeds! Tell them that not the hearers of the Divine word, but

only the doers of the Divine will, are true Christians ; that we are not to glorify God in words, but by virtuous actions ; that whosoever does not in action give proofs of love, of humility, of obedience, of a conciliatory disposition, and of devotion to the public welfare — whosoever is incapable of sacrificing himself for the happiness of his brothers, as Jesus Christ sacrificed himself — does not live with Jesus, does not live in God.

O ye fathers and mothers ! let us consecrate to God the darlings of our hearts, whom He has intrusted to us ! Impart to them during the earlier years of their lives the holy teachings of religion, so that their souls, penetrated by them, may acquire strength to encounter courageously and cheerfully whatever fate may be in store for them. You may then one day approach the throne of the Eternal Judge with joyful hearts, and say, “ Lord, here are they whom thou didst intrust to me ! ” Then, when death comes and separates you from them for a short while, you may depart with the sweet hope of being soon reunited with them. For they will have walked in the path of salvation with you. They will have held in life the same faith, and cherished the same love, as you. Their hope in death will be the same as yours ! And your destiny will remain indissolubly bound to theirs, as your souls were indissolubly united in life.

Yea, those that Thou hast united, O Father in heaven, the grave has no power to separate ; and those who have bound themselves to Thee, through Jesus, cannot be dissevered from Thee. Oh, sweet balm of Revelation, holy truth of Faith, penetrate the tender hearts of our children, and strengthen them and make them happy ! And Thou, O Holy

Spirit of God, guide our children through the labyrinth of life towards the great and eternal goal of all spirits, towards the goal which Jesus disclosed to us, and to enable us to reach which He shed his precious blood. Amen.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES IN YOUTH.

With earnest gaze, the soul of youth
Looks up, O God, to thee!
Clear Thou his mind to know the truth,
Open his eyes to see.

Towards his chosen goal he speeds,
Through life, with courage high;
O, ne'er to him be noble deeds,
Or virtue, mockery!

Who God within his breast retains,
Till life's last course be run,
Sorrow or joy alike sustains,
For him the fight is won.

(Prov. ii. 1.)

TO thee, tender, emotional heart of youth, I dedicate these pages of love, of sanctification, and of secret devotion. Nay, a loving Providence dedicates them to thee, by allowing them to fall into thy hands. Wilt thou lay them by without heeding them? Surely, thou canst not be so indifferent to thine own welfare.

Thou hast attained the age when every day will make thee more independent of those who have hitherto had the care of thy education, and will make thee more dependent on thyself. Thy parents may die; thy older relatives may die; and at length all that belonged to thy childhood will vanish. Soon thou mayst stand alone in the world. Soon thou mayst know what it is to be thus isolated in life, to

have no one to lean upon but one's self! Ever since thou didst draw thy first breath, and up to this moment, thou hast been watched over by loving and devoted hearts. Now thou must fall off from the parent stem, like a ripe fruit. Thou must learn to take care of thyself, and thus learn to take care of others too.

Long has this moment been anticipated with dread, by those who love thee most. Be assured the heart of father and of mother have often throbbed with anxiety at the thought of it. Perhaps as yet thou canst not see wherefore, but one day thou wilt understand it. As for thyself, thou hast probably been longing for the day that would free thee from control, and allow thee to live independently. Thy childhood has probably seemed to thee to be too long protracted. Well, thou hast now escaped from it. But I tell thee that a day will come when thou wilt look back to it as to a lost paradise, and wish that it could return. I tell thee thou wilt soon cease to be joyous and guileless as thou hast hitherto been. Perhaps thou art already no longer so. For many a year thou wert guarded by the prudence and strength of others from unforeseen evils and troubles. Hereafter thou must guard thyself. And yet, alas, it is to thyself that thou wilt, though unconsciously, owe the greater number of troubles that will befall thee.

Dear soul, even on the threshold of life truth bids me meet thee with the sad prediction, that much suffering, much unhappiness, awaits thee. Nay, smile not incredulously, for ere long, perhaps, thou wilt peruse these pages with tearful eyes.

But how art thou to guard thyself, thou whose strength is still unpracticed? How art thou to guard

thyself, thou whose experience, whose knowledge, is still so limited? How art thou to guard thyself whilst standing so alone in life, with no one on whom thou canst depend, whilst perhaps betrayed and abandoned by those in whom thou didst most confide?

What is to be thy shield? How art thou to grow strong in the midst of the storms of life, and wise in the midst of the confusion of unknown circumstances? I will tell thee. Not by thine own power, but through the aid of a higher Power, who watches over thee,—through the power of GOD. Many that are stronger than thou have fallen, because, relying on their own strength, they leant not upon God. Thou also wilt fall, unless thou holdest fast by Him.

It is thy duty to guard thyself, and thou canst do it. But not by thine own wisdom, but by following the guidance of One far wiser than thou, who died that thou mightst be saved. Thou canst do so, taught by the wisdom of the Divine Man, whom, during two thousand years, the wisest of mortals have called their Saviour,—by the wisdom of Jesus. Many that were cleverer than thou art have fallen, because, relying on their own cunning, ability, and arts, they abandoned Jesus, or because they had never known Him. Verily, I say unto thee, unless thou followest Him, thou also wilt fall.

Dost thou know Jesus Christ? Ever since thy childhood thou has seen thousands and thousands praying in his name in the temples of God. The learned and the ignorant, rulers and people, old men and young children, the rich and the poor. All pronounce the name of Jesus with deep reverence. Dost thou know Him? Dost thou confide in Him? Dost

thou venerate Him? Or hast thou remained indifferent to Him? Dost thou think the whole world mistaken, and thyself alone in the right?

Thou art baptized in his name, and hast thus been adopted into the community of the millions and millions who are strengthened, exalted, and made holy and happy by his Spirit, by his living words. Therefore art thou called a Christian. But dost thou know Christ?

Thou hast taken the communion? What emotions held possession of thy heart in the solemn hour, before thou didst approach the altar? Was not thy heart penetrated by holy feelings, when publicly, as well as inwardly, standing before the altar, thou becamest for a moment, as it were, one in body and spirit with Christ? But dost thou know Him?

It is He who binds thy immortal spirit to the loving God, to the Father of the infinite universe, who is also thy Father. It is He who links the days which thou livest upon earth to the days of another life into which thou wilt enter in the hour of death. He that doeth this is Jesus, the divine Son! And this linking of our souls to God and eternity, which we have learnt from him, is RELIGION; and when in solemn earnestness thou dost knit this bond, thou art truly religious.

While thou art still fresh and young, and engaged in the pleasures and occupations of youth, it seems, perhaps, too much to demand of thee that thou shouldst earnestly devote thyself to religion. But, verily, it only seems so. Can it ever be too early to acquire lasting peace of mind, lasting cheerfulness of soul, lasting inward happiness? Certainly not. Religion, therefore, can never come too early to you.

A pious old man may be venerable, a mother in prayer may be a touching spectacle, but a religious youth, a religious young maiden, are not less venerable, and are by their very piety made the more attractive in the eyes of the world.

Why should the seriousness of religion be unsuited to thy years? It is true the thought of God and eternity is a serious thought, because it is the most exalted one that mortal man can think and utter. But it is the very solemnity of the thought that fills the heart with the purest joy; that will guard thee from many faults, and therefore keep thy conscience clear; that will inspire trust in a loving Providence, and render thee fearless of whatsoever may befall thee. The most religious man is also the happiest. The irreligious man oscillates between extreme gaiety and extreme melancholy: he is seldom of equable temper, and is more unhappy in mind than the reverse, even when he seems joyous and content. Religion, far from making us moody and dark, gives a new zest to our joy, while in the hour of suffering it lends to the mind that serene magnanimity, the experience of which is sweeter than any worldly pleasure.

Think not that thy friends have no religion because they seldom speak of religious matters. There are hours of solitude, in which they fold their hands,—in which their hearts tremble, and their eyes are raised to heaven, and their spirit communes with God. But to every feeling mind religion is what it holds highest and most sacred, and therefore they shrink from exposing it to the vulgar gaze of the many. Each one shuts up the jewel in his own heart. Each one knows how he stands before God. Why

should he make it a subject of common conversation with others? Of what avail would this be to himself or to others? He would, perhaps, only run the risk of being misunderstood and misjudged.

Think not that even those persons are without religion, who, from vanity or thoughtlessness, and in order to be looked upon as unusually clever and witty, forget themselves so far as to scoff at religious observances, religious acts, and religious doctrines. We ought never to scoff at that which is sacred in the eyes of others, and which leads them to good. But even scoffers are religious in the depths of their hearts, and in spite of their thoughtlessness. The misfortunes that befall them, the forewarnings of death, the threatenings of the future, urge them to pray; and they, who often laughed at prayer, pray. They who would fain persuade themselves that they doubt the immortality of the spirit, nevertheless look trustingly forward to eternity, because the laws of their nature bid them do so. Religion has not been *invented* or *made*. It is the very breath, the thought, and the life of the spirit. Therefore it is not we alone — our times alone — that have a religion; all times have had one. And it is not only the civilized nations of our times that have a religion; but the wild Indians beyond the seas have one, and had one before they became known to the rest of the world. It is true their religious ideas are confused, puerile, very faulty, because the mental capacities of these people have been misguided, or have not been developed or exercised. In like manner, our religious notions, in early childhood, were very puerile; and now that we have attained to a higher stage of mental development, and possess more knowledge, they seem to us

almost ridiculous. But though the barbarous savage may worship the creature instead of the Creator, — though he may make offerings to the Deity of slaughtered animals, instead of offering up a pure heart, — the relation he establishes is, nevertheless, religion, and what he feels is religiosity : it is a linking of his spirit with the Invisible, the Eternal, the Unknown. And this is the great merit of Christ, that He came into the world to guide humanity from darkness into light, from the perishable to the imperishable, from error to truths ; to release us from the bondage of sin and to raise us up into the sanctuary of God.

In fact, none are entirely without religion, except madmen and confirmed skeptics ; and the latter, as well as the former, may be considered sick in mind. The tendency to skepticism, with its accompanying wretchedness, is generally experienced in the years that intervene between the attainment of majority and riper manhood. It will frequently be found that persons who, as children, believe, pray, and love with true childlike simplicity, but who, when at a mature age they enter the world, and begin to inquire and to think for themselves, become the prey of religious doubts, at a more advanced period of life again recover their faith, their convictions, and their lost peace of mind.

It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that the religious skepticism, which so frequently imbitters those years in which the mental powers begin to develop themselves, is a consequence of the great mental insight then attained by the youth or maiden. On the contrary, they have only just emerged from childhood ; their experiences in regard to the world, to nature, and to the destinies of men, are still very

limited, and their judgment, consequently, still very unripe. Their skepticism, therefore, arises rather from want of insight, and from a false use of their mental powers.

At the age when the understanding is only beginning to put forth its strength, the imagination very frequently usurps its place. Many things which, in childhood, have been accepted and believed in, now prove, by closer investigation, to be untenable or unworthy of credence, or even contrary to common sense; they are, therefore, discarded, and the mind is alarmed. Distrust of other doctrines of the Church is engendered; these also are submitted to investigation, and thus doubts arise. Books are read without any previous inquiry into the worth of the writer; dissentient judgments are accepted as irrefutable; witty remarks are taken for arguments; and mere appearances are considered undeniable truth. Thus the confusion of mind becomes ever greater; the tendency to doubt everything formerly believed in increases in strength; and, finally, everything is rejected, nothing is believed. The consequence of this is real inward irreligiosity, — the most painful state of mind to which a human being can be a prey, because it is unnatural, that is to say, is in direct opposition to the feelings and the nature of the spirit. The connection between the latter and the living God — the Eternal Existence — is destroyed. You feel yourself alone in the great universe. All religious persons are in your eyes deceivers or dupes. The world and life become dark enigmas. At last the skeptic even learns to doubt himself. Existence has no more joys for him, and suffering knows no consolation. He longs to return to the blind faith of his

childhood, yet feels that it is impossible to do so. He pines for light and rest, and abhors his doubts, yet has neither strength nor courage to believe.

This unhappy state of conflict goes on ; the skeptic can come to no conclusion, because he is ever deceiving himself anew, and attempting impossibilities by endeavoring to apply the measure of the feelings and the imagination to that which can only be fathomed by pure reason. The eternal cannot be grasped by the imagination, and therefore he rejects it, while he expects to obtain certainty as to the spiritual and the invisible, in the same manner as he obtains it as to corporeal and visible things. He now proceeds from one contradiction to another ; he acknowledges that he can form no conception of his own spirit, yet he does not deny its existence and its mysterious action. But the existence of the Godhead and his mysterious action the skeptic doubts, because he cannot understand it in the same way as he understands other things. Yet every day and every hour God speaks to us through his great and loving activity in us and out of us, in like manner as our spirit announces itself through thoughts and words. The nature of things is the thought and the word of God to the human spirit.

The constant mistake of the skeptic is, that he demands to see that which is invisible, and to have that which is not earthly and not human *demonstrated* in an earthly and human way. If the existence of our own spirits can be proved, proof is at the same time afforded of the existence of God. For that a Deity rules the world is revealed to us, *by Him*, in the laws of our thought, which are so constituted that they necessarily and invariably bring us back to this. This

is the self-revelation of the Deity in the nature of man. Therefore have all nations of the earth from the beginning of time, and without having any intercourse with each other, believed in the existence of divine beings.

No philosopher has ever expressed the all-ruling power of the living God in such simple and sublime words as those recorded in the Holy Scriptures which David spake thousands of years ago, and which are as comprehensible to the child as to the most learned man: "He that planteth the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not He know?"

The first step towards recovery from the mental disease of skepticism is to come to a firm determination to avoid, even if it be for months or years, all those speculations on religious and metaphysical subjects that lead to doubt. Not until this has been done can the mind recover its former elasticity and freedom, and that simplicity which will make it again receptive for truth. Then the spirit will find God again, — sometimes even without seeking Him, — will find the comfort of eternal life again, and the most blessed trust and the deepest peace. And it will understand what before was enigmatical, and will be astonished at having until then failed to recognize the simple sublimity, lucidity, and truth of the doctrines of Jesus. And the Gospels will inspire into the heart a quickening and divine strength.

Religiosity is the all-penetrating light of the spiritual world; where it is not, there is darkness, confusion, destruction. In like manner as noble religious sentiments give new youth to the spirit of the aged, so they render strong and manly the spirit of the

young, and endow it with the wisdom of age. The youth or the maiden who is bound to God and to eternity, will ever strive to think, to speak, and to act in a manner worthy of God and of eternity. They have the consciousness of being even in secret at peace with God, the Judge who seeth in secret; and in regard to the world their acts are such as they can answer for to Him to whom even the most powerful of the earth are responsible.

The older we grow, the clearer our religious notions become; the more thoroughly we understand the meaning of Jesus' words; the more distinctly we see God in the wonders of the earth and the heavens; the more gloriously does his government appear to us in the various events of our life.

Therefore we ought always to keep alive the religious sentiments and principles within us, without, however, parading them before the world. They ought to be expressed in reverence for all that is holy; in tenderness towards the weaknesses of others; in kind judgment of our fellow-beings; in hearty readiness to be of use to those who are known to us, and also to those who are unknown to us; in respect shown to our superiors; in kindness to our inferiors; in unswerving firmness in the performance of duty; in moderation in pleasure and patience under provocation; in imitation of all that is good, and in abhorrence of all shameful and forbidden acts and even thoughts.

However, man is weak. Noble sentiments evaporate, good principles are often forgotten. Common life, with its occupations, its pleasures, and its many annoyances, overwhelms and conquers us, and drags us down into the slough of meanness and depravity.

But we must make a strong effort to raise ourselves up. If we do not this, we shall sink ever lower into mere animal life.

Therefore, if thou wouldst retain the religious character of thy mind in full vigor, thou must nourish it in thine hours of solitude. Nourish it by reading good religious works ; by reading the Scriptures, — more particularly the life of Jesus, or the psalms of David, and the songs of Asaph ; and by attendance on public worship.

Even these pages are devoted to keeping alive thy inward piety. Recognize in the words here addressed to thee, the voice of father and mother, and of all good men who love thee, and who would fain see thee grow in goodness and in happiness. Recognize therein the voices of generations that have descended before thee into the grave, but who address themselves to thy heart ; the voices of the blessed who call to thee that thou mayest one day be blessed as they.

Efficacious above all things, however, — above reading and hearing, — is immediate communion with God in prayer. Let no day pass without devoting some portion of it, be it an hour or even only a minute, to communion with thy Heavenly and Eternal Father. In the morning when thou awakest from refreshing sleep, and in the evening when thou closest thine eyes to go to rest, first lift up thy spirit to the Eternal Spirit, and pray and offer up thanks, and promises to mend thy ways before Him. Pray, as Jesus prayed, lovingly, trustingly, with entire resignation : “ Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt ! ” Pray, as Solomon once prayed, not for earthly goods, not for aught perishable, but for wisdom and strength to overcome thy faults and thy passions, for

power and opportunities to do much good, and ever to grow more perfect as thy Father in heaven is perfect.

Christian piety is the highest wisdom, and makes those who possess it lovable in the sight of man and God. For that wisdom enters not a malignant mind, and dwells not in a body given over to sin. But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God; they are not cast down by suffering. Righteousness is immortal. Only through this, and through being deemed righteous by thee, O Holy, Eternal God, am I immortal, eternal, and blessed! Is it possible that I should ever forget this? That I should ever forget Thee? That I should ever forget the sacred vows that I have made to Thee, or all that thou hast done for me, for my parents, and for all those that I love? Is it possible that I should ever forget Jesus, the Divine Friend of my soul, — He who by his light has led me to Thee? He who, full of pity, died for me?

Nay! To abandon God, is to abandon myself, to give up my salvation. Nay! Let me ever remain thy child, O my God and Father! Let me cling to Thee midst all the distractions of life! To Thee I will look up in the hours of joy which Thou mayest send me; and by Thee I will hold fast in the hour of trial when the last earthly hope forsakes me. For Thou wilt not forget me, nor overlook me; I know this, Jesus has taught me this, and life also has taught it to me. In the hour of dissolution, when my dying lips stammer forth thy name for the last time here below, I shall know and feel that Thou wilt not forget me, nor overlook me!

It is therefore far more possible that my soul should be dissevered from my body, than that I

should be dissevered from Thee, Father in Heaven. I will seek for Thee in the works that Thou hast created, in the marvels wherewith Thou hast filled the universe. I will approach ever nearer to Thee through the knowledge I have acquired through Jesus Christ, my Saviour. I will draw nearer to Thee by growing in virtue, and by shunning everything sinful. Omnipresent, Omniscient, Invisible God, who searchest my heart, as I would that Thou shouldst search it. Ah ! Thou knowest my weakness and my thoughtlessness ; Thou knowest how often I fail. O Holy, Eternal Mercy ! strengthen me, hold me up, that I may not fall ; that neither the seductions of my senses, nor the misleading example of others, nor vanity, nor ambition, nor lust, nor flattery, nor hatred, may draw me away from Thee !

God of my childhood, Thou wilt be the God of my old age also, and bound to Thee through Jesus Christ, I thus possess far more than all this world has to offer me. If I have Thee, I have inward peace, and, however dark my life may be, I have the joyful prospect of a future existence full of bliss. Amen.

MEN'S ESTIMATE OF LIFE.

Man hasteth on from dream to dream,
'Midst hate, and now 'midst love ;
As if upon life's narrow stream,
His bark some spirit drove.
He looketh round, and seeketh happiness to clasp,
And vanity and dust is all that meets his grasp.

Be the world thine, —
Let fortune's sunlight gild thy mortal lot,
Be lord of all earth counteth most divine, —
Yet happiness, thou hast her not.
Only to holy souls can perfect bliss be known ;
No fruit is she of worldly fame or gold ;
In the bright spirit-world alone
Her buds unfold.

Not here will she be given,
'Midst tumult and deceit :
Thy prize thou 'lt win in heaven,
At Jesus' feet.

(PHILIPP. ii. 13, 14.)

FLEETING days ! fleeting years ! We await with impatience the coming of flower-crowned spring, and in a short while we sigh, because it has already gone by ! What we call months, years, ages, before they come, we call minutes when they are gone. Childhood longs for adolescence, youth for riper manhood. Both arrive but too soon, and after these old age, also too soon. White-headed men look back with sad longing to the past, as to a dream. It was the same thousands and thousands of years ago. The generations of the past have long gone by ; their ashes have long been dispersed. But we, with our

desires, our expectations, and our regrets, we are still what they were. And as we are to-day, so will our descendants be for thousands and thousands of years to come, when we and our families have long passed away, and our ashes have long been scattered by the winds.

This hurrying and pressing forward of mortals never ceases, and yet how soon comes the end to each man. Each century sees three new generations come into life and pass away. Yet all hurry and press forward, as if life were never to end. They heap up riches and chattels, as though they were to provide for a century; they quarrel, and make war, and negotiate, as though their rule were to last forever; they solicit and struggle for honors and dignities, as though they could grasp the infinite on earth; they buy and chaffer, accumulate, and build, as though they were never to leave their treasures and their houses; and then they descend into the grave, and bequeath the fruits of their labors to others; and as they once rejoiced in their inheritance after departed relatives, so others rejoice at what they inherit from them.

While contemplating the toying and trifling, the working and toiling of men, one might almost be tempted to believe that there is no such thing as death in the world. Children, youths, and maidens, manhood and old age, depart this life, yet those who remain seem to think that these alone were mortal, and that of the survivors none are subject to death. Men return from the graves of their friends or acquaintances either smiling or in tears, and then go their way and forget the dead, in like manner as soldiers on a battle-field behold with indifference their

comrades falling on the left and on the right, and the survivors shout their songs of triumph as though the victory had been won by themselves alone.

People speak about all matters ; about war and peace, about the partition of countries and nations, about their own plans, about their successful or unsuccessful undertakings, about entertainments and merry-makings, about enmities, marriages, and voyages. But who ever hears conversation turn on eternity, whether it be in numerous assemblies, or even when two or three only are gathered together ? One might almost suppose that the belief in eternity were an exploded fable, which no one any longer cared to hear repeated, or that such belief had entirely ceased to exist among men. And yet all this is but outward appearance. Nay, men keep silence about it ; but it stands before them, and their inward eye is almost constantly fixed earnestly and gloomily upon it. They are silent, but believe ; perhaps they put on a smile of incredulity when the subject is mentioned ; but they believe and tremble. Maidens adorn themselves for the dance ; but even in front of their mirrors the thought of the grave flits through their mind. Industrious men count up their earnings ; but even while the gold is jingling in their hands the thought of death rises in their minds. Princes wrap themselves in their purple, and grasp the sceptre of command ; but even on the throne, in the full consciousness of their power, the thought of eternity flashes involuntarily upon them. Though all are silent on the subject, it is ever before them. Appearances are outward ; truth dwells hidden in secret in the heart.

And thus each one silently connects his outer life with his inward life, but lets no one into his secret.

Each one believes in God and in eternity ; but how he believes, and how he keeps his faith, that he divulges to no one. In the secret depths of his own mind only, he communes trustingly with God, and receives his revelations. Each one fears that were he to betray to others his secret of secrets, it might be desecrated ; and he feels that even the most delicate objection raised would wound him, though he might be little disposed to refute it ; for that which we believe, and that which we are in our innermost being, that is our real self ; and this we would not have any strange eye to behold, or any strange doubt to touch. That which we show to the world is but an outward garment of prudence, — a mere semblance of ourselves. Each one knows this of his fellow-man, and respects his secret, and along with this his outward semblance, for each one demands the same respect for himself and for all others.

It is not necessary to teach men that they live a twofold life here below, for every man knows by his experience that it is so. But the nature of this twofold life is different in each, according to the degree of mental development attained. One prizes his earthly, sensual life more highly than his inner and eternal being ; another values both equally ; a third feels distinctly that the worth of this earthly existence is far inferior to that of eternal life.

The rude savage, whose powers of mind are still undeveloped, and who therefore follows blindly his instincts, and seeks only to gratify the wants of his body ; the child, who lacks experience, and therefore lives but in the present, and plays with the flowers that grow on graves, without the slightest suspicion that he shall himself one day sleep in the earth ; the

subtle thinker, who, misled by the false culture of his mental powers, and by the strength of his passions, has allowed himself to sink back into a state of animalism, and who, in his perversion of intellect, would fain persuade himself that everything is of the earth, earthy, that everything is chance, that when man breathes his last breath everything is over, — all these stand on the same level, on the lowest step of spiritual development. Still closely bound in the fetters of the body, like the animal, they have no perception of a higher life, or any idea of the elevation of spirit that renders it possible. The world in the midst of which they live is everything to them; beyond this, nothing has any value in their eyes.

However, by far the greater number of men have a certain inward religiosity, which bears more or less resemblance to the religion that they profess with their lips. They know that they will not cease to exist, though their bodies die; they know that they have to prepare for a better life yon side the grave; but their conceptions of the value of the present and the future life are still confused and imperfect. Too strongly attached to those matters which surround them daily, and which are pleasant to their senses and agree with their tastes, they value this world as highly as they value heaven. They would fain enjoy all that this world has to give, and their greatest exertions are directed towards securing such enjoyment. At intervals, it is true, they also think of eternity, and flatter themselves that by repeating long prayers, by giving alms, by attending church, and by taking the sacraments, they will be able to satisfy the Deity, and to secure for their souls a higher and more blessed state of existence after death.

These men see not the great general connection between the here and the hereafter. They would fain satisfy their animal desires here below, and yet hope to become suddenly higher spirits in the blessed abodes above; they allow themselves to indulge here below in the works of the flesh, such as pride, deception, voluptuousness, and envy, and they hope, through the merits of Jesus Christ or through the intercession of saints, to obtain pardon for all their sins, and to attain to perfection in the other world. Upon the whole, they belong to the present; the world is their chief concern; as long as they are in it they give themselves up to it. To their short-sighted eyes eternity is too distant to be clearly discerned. They are still too little conscious of their dignity as spirits; therefore that which is earthly is of so much more importance in their eyes than that which is spiritual.

The more a man himself is worth, the less worth has this fleeting world and all evanescent things in his eyes; the more inclined he is to place God, eternity, and virtue above all else. He who has got so far as to be perfectly content with little, — is he likely to care for heaps of gold? He who has got so far as to discern how blindly men judge according to appearances only, and how little they are inclined to acknowledge and to honor true merit, or to repay benefits with gratitude, — is he likely to attach much importance to the opinion of the great multitude, or to the acquisition of worldly honors and consideration? He who has once tasted the bitter sorrow of being deprived of his fortune or of his good name by the malignant deeds of evil-minded men, or has stood broken-hearted by the death-bed of a beloved object,

be it mother, father, child, or friend, — is he likely still to cling with blind passion to the goods of this earth, when he has learnt, by such painful experience, that he who attaches himself too strongly to that which must pass away, prepares for himself the most cruel sufferings ?

On the other hand, the wise man who recognizes the nothingness of all earthly matters, and who, for the sake of his own peace of mind, refrains from attaching himself passionately to any of these, because he clearly discerns that inward, indestructible happiness cannot be based upon the fulfillment of external desires, — that true peace and contentment of mind, far from being increased by the desire for luxury, honors, riches, admiration, can only be destroyed thereby, — that the consciousness of having fulfilled great duties, of having freed one's self from the influence of the passions and of vulgar prejudices, that oneness with God, and walking through this checkered life in the exalted yet humble spirit of Jesus, can alone establish lasting happiness, — he who feels this becomes a more divine being, and in his eyes life loses its value. Though his heart may from time to time beat more warmly for some one earthly object, he can nevertheless repeat with truth the words of the wise and experienced disciple of Christ, who was exalted above every earthly fate : “ Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philipp. iii. 13, 14.)

Is there one among us who, however perfect he may be, can say with truth : “ I have already reached

the goal ! I have accomplished my task ! There is naught earthly to which my heart clings with over-weening love ! ” Ah, he who can speak thus, must he not be more than mortal ? Let us, therefore, beware of forming exaggerated notions of what is meant by renunciation of the world. We still walk in the flesh ; our mortal bodies have their wants, which, in accordance with the will of the Creator, must be satisfied, if we would not become suicides. Until the very last moment of life, our sensual requirements must, according to the eternal laws of nature, be satisfied. The instincts and desires which belong to our carnal nature are, in as far as they conduce to maintain life and bodily health, by no means sinful, but, on the contrary, pure and good. We are, however, apt to make one or other of these desires too predominant, either by over-stimulation or by undue indulgence of it ; this engenders mental passion, and, as a consequence, immoderate attachment to some one earthly object or another.

Man is, therefore, as long as he lives, engaged in a constant struggle with the sensuous world, at one moment attracted by it, and the next repelling it. He tears aside the bonds that fetter him too closely, and puts on new ones. He can never thoroughly emancipate himself, and yet it ought to be his constant endeavor to free himself from the influences of what is merely sensuous. Even in his last hour he will have to say with St. Paul : “ Not that I count myself as having comprehended, or that I be already perfect ! ”

But one thing let us all say : Forgetting those things which are behind, I reach forth unto those things which are before. I honor the wants and re-

quirements of external life ; but my higher life, walking in the ways of the Lord, virtuous willing and doing, rises above all that is perishable. I will govern my inclinations and my aversions, and will not allow myself to be governed by them. I will do what is right, what is noble, what is useful to others, however much my other inclinations may be opposed to this. Not human approval merely, not the praise of my fellow-citizens, not the blame of the great multitude, not ambition, nor either the hope of gain in other ways, shall determine me to do that which, according to my innermost convictions, is right, and god-like, and worthy of a disciple of Jesus. The world can neither reward nor punish my spirit. It finds its reward in likeness to God, and its most fearful punishments in deviation from his ways. Therefore I shall not allow the enjoyments of this world either to lure me to what is evil or to what is good ; for they are meant to serve the body, not the spirit. But forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

This world, though it possess much that is pleasant to me, and much that I might desire, is not the final goal of my existence. God has called me to a heavenly inheritance, to a spiritual life, to a state of perfection, of the extent and glory of which I cannot now in my human frame form any conception, though a vague presentiment thereof floats in my spirit. This eternal existence, this likeness to God, this unclouded comprehension of God, of myself, and of the universe, this state of holiness in the infinite Holiness, — this is the mark towards which I press, this is the prize of

the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. But this my goal, and this my calling through God, I have learnt to know in Christ and through Christ. For it is He that shed light through the deep darkness of life ; and therefore He is truly called the Light and the Life. It is He who, by his revealed word, has led me up, from endless confusion, from the depths of error, to God, to the Father of the universe, and to endless bliss. I shall be with God, shall find Him in the abodes of bliss, if I will but follow Jesus ; for He, that is to say, his virtues, are the way to true life. And the virtue of Jesus is to do the will of the Father. And the will of the Heavenly Father is that we should love Him above all things, and that we should strive to make every one of our fellow-beings with whom we are brought into any kind of relation as happy as we would endeavor to make ourselves.

Every true disciple of the Divine Master, therefore, attaches but little value to the present existence. He does not waste hours on the adornment of his perishable body, the destiny of which is to return to dust ; and though pleased to have gained the esteem of good men, he does not allow himself to be made to waver in his duties by the approval or the disapproval of his fellows. What he wills and does, he does not because of the judgment of men, but from love of Jesus, — that is to say, from love of holiness. He rejoices in friendship, in the tender sentiments of love given and received, but he remains, nevertheless, master of his feelings. LOVE is immortal, and spiritual beings never lose each other in the infinite universe, but MAN is mortal. Therefore the true disciple of the Lord, the Christian sage, does not build the entire happiness of his existence on the frail life of a human being. Wife, love thy husband ; youth, love the

maiden thy heart has chosen ; father, mother, love thy child ! But never forget that death must one day necessarily separate you ; and how, then, will it be with your peace of mind, your happiness ? Does the thought make you shudder, and do you fear that with the death of the beloved one all peace and all happiness will be lost to you ? If so, then, however pious and good you may be, you cling too strongly to the world, you attach an undue value to it, you love passionately, immoderately, and therefore you are not free, not happy, and will not be so, until on this point also you have learnt to be strong, — until on this point also you are able to raise yourselves, through hope in eternal existence, so far above all that belongs to this earth only, that you can lose that which you love best without losing that inward happiness and that heavenly peace which the consciousness of virtue gives. The less value this earthly life has in your eyes, the greater is your own worth. Then only will you be able to say, with the pious but heroic Apostle, “ Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.” (2 Cor. v. 6, 8, 9.)

Whither has this meditation led me ? Here I stand, placed beyond myself, as it were, and looking at myself, at the world, and looking, O my God, up to Thee ! And while gazing at all those things in the world which most especially attract me, — at all those objects which, when I am near unto them, make my heart beat more joyfully, and which, were I to lose them, would precipitate me into inexpressi-

ble grief, — I take the measure of my own worth. As yet, alas, I am far from having reached perfection, for I still love and fear too much from a life which ought not to call forth passionate attachment or passionate fear. As yet I cling too strongly to much that is neither good for my inward peace, for my inward happiness, or even for my virtue. Not that I ought to renounce all the sweet and noble pleasures that THY love offers me here on earth, but that the perishable should not conquer that which is eternal in me, is Thy commandment; to fulfill this ought to be my object!

Lord, teach me to remember how short are my days on earth, how uncertain all the goods of this life, so that, without straying from Thee, I may enjoy them with wise moderation, and submit to their loss with noble resignation. This is the true renunciation of the world which Thy Son, Jesus, the Messiah, recommends to us.

Lord, teach me to remember that this abiding upon earth is but a point in my eternal existence, that my true life will be in heaven. That which awaits me beyond the grave is unknown to me, and were it known to me, I should be unable to comprehend it. Can the child who still clings to its toys as the only source of enjoyment conceive the nobler pleasures of riper years? Thus we, also, here below walk in faith and not by sight.

Lord, teach me to remember my own value, that the value of this life may be abased in my eyes. Give me strength, let thy Holy Spirit be ever with me; thus only shall I free myself from the luring charms of the perishable, and from the thralldom of passion. Thou, O Lord, art the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Amen.

GOD'S RULE.

In the soul's kingdom God alone bears sway.
Dare men — dare dust — deny or disobey?
Who rules above, rules also here below, —
To Him man's wisdom is an idle show.
A yoke of iron to the scorner's neck,
Thy word shall crush him, and Thy rod shall break;
Then hastes he, ere Thy judgment wake, to win
Thy pardon, Lord, and to confess his sin.

But should God send his blessing on the land,
And guard the people with his sheltering hand
Who can withstand his will? his servants find
Their foes dispersed, like chaff before the wind —
Therefore, ye nations, be his powers adored!
Ye kingdoms, bow in worship to the Lord!
Let Him bear rule, — for He is God alone,
And what He doeth, that must be well done.

(PSALM xlv. 10.)

BE still, and know that I am God! Thus speaks the voice of the Lord to us from out of the great events of the world. That which princes and peoples have for years unanimously desired, and for which they have striven, is seldom attained. Something different from what we expect is ever occurring. Few persons have understood this. They believe that to be the doing of man which is the ruling of God. In like manner many changes have taken place which mortals in their blind folly would fain have prevented. They believed that there was no salvation, no happiness for them except in the old state of things. They strove to bring back the past by violence, and thus rendered themselves miserable,

and made the present ever more new. That which the hand of God has once struck down is never to rise again. Princes and peoples have struggled, but the past has not come back, while the new structure, contrary to the wishes of all, has become ever more perfect and more firmly established. In vain are the ravings and the fury of man; what is to be, comes to pass, nothing more and nothing less. Everything has its limit, which no man can overstep. The mightiest are checked in their career by an invisible hand.

Be still, and know that I am God! Bow to the will of the Lord! Ye seek with all your art and power to conjure the past back from the grave into which it has sunk. True wisdom would recommend you to accept and to utilize the new state of things so as to make it productive of more strength, more peace, more well-being, and more joy than could ever have grown out of the old state. Those are unwise who disdain the good which the present affords, because of the better things which the future may have in store; but more unwise still are they who disdain the present because they desire that yesterday should become to-morrow. When did the stream of time stand still, or when did the course of the world turn back? Everything speeds forward, nothing remains ever the same. The good see good in everything; the wise know how to select the best from all things.

Recognize the ruling hand of God! He has struck down the exalted, and raised up the humble. Who is like unto Him in might? Who could stay his power to do as he listeth? Of what avail were the mightiest fleets that ever rode the waves? He sent a blast of wind, which raised the billows, and the ships

were dispersed, and what no mortal had looked forward to took place ; and what human intellect had cunningly pre-calculated came to naught. Of what avail were the mightiest hosts of armed men ? He breathed upon them, and it was the breath of death. Their corpses and their arms lay strewn upon the battle-field ; and what they were to have accomplished remained undone ; the weak grew strong, and the mighty powerless. God willed it so. Of what avail were the cunning plans of the leaders, the valor of the commanders ? A trifle upset the gigantic projects ; a grain of dust stopped the great clock-work ; the valiant hero stepped unknowingly into the path of the deadly ball speeding towards him ; and he who threatened the lives of thousands lay lifeless himself in the dust. No one is mighty before the Lord. Wise men have been left to sigh in dungeons, yet their words have inspired millions of other men, and have changed the destinies of entire continents. No one knows for what God has destined him. Each one of us is an instrument in the hand of Providence. Thine, O man, is the good-will evinced in thine acts, but the results depend on God. Thou art answerable for the will, the consequences belong to the government of the world. Be still, saith the Lord, and know that I am God !

Know Him, the only One, the Ruler of all, who dwells above us in majestic mystery ; who regulates the course of the suns and the moons, and the gentle flights of the butterflies ; who judges the deeds of kings and beggars by the same standard ; who determines the weal and woe of entire divisions of the globe, and of the humblest and most obscure family with equal wisdom ; without whose will nothing hap-

pens. He has saved innocence when condemned, and drawn the secret criminal into the light of day, and laid bare his hidden sufferings, so that all have shuddered back from them. When an honest man has become the victim of the slander of envious minds; when he has fallen a prey to the most infamous suspicions, and all means of justifying himself in the eyes of the world fail, and every appearance is against him, and a circumstance that had until then escaped all observation suddenly testifies in favor of the slandered man, and his righteousness is finally as honorably vindicated as the malignity of his contemptible persecutors is thoroughly unveiled, — this circumstance (which you call accident) is a sign of the ruling hand of God.

Often one hour, one minute, has sufficed to bring to light the sins which have been committed in secret by evil-doers, who have long succeeded in hiding in darkness their nefarious acts, be it of cruel usury, of dishonest acquisition of inheritance, of oppression of widows, of cunning overreaching of the weak and good-natured, of fraudulent use of the property of others; or be it of secret intrigues against the good name of one whom in public they pretended to honor, or of calumnious betrayal of one whom they praised to his face. The ray of light which on such occasions has fallen through an unobserved chink into the chambers of iniquity, and has revealed the deeds of darkness in all their hideousness, — this ray shows us the ruling hand of God! For such is the holy law of the entire universe: that which is condemnable can never escape its condemnation. When the disgusting diseases brought on by secret licentiousness at last betray to the whole world the conduct of the dishon-

orable hypocrite ; when the enervated valetudinarian reaps in early death the fruits of his incontinence ; when a word spoken without reflection, or a drop of blood which has remained uneffaced, or the prattle of a child, or a handful of fresh earth, or a faithful animal, or a change of color in the cheek, has, after the lapse perhaps of years, delivered into the hands of justice the author of a murder, a secret poisoner, a revengeful cutthroat, — oh say not that it was accident, for it was God's ruling hand ! To every secret sinner comes the day of judgment ; and were he to heap mountains on the evidences of his misdeeds, though only dark night, or silent walls, or solitary forests were the witnesses of his crime, — the mountains will be dispersed like dust before the wind, and discover what was hidden beneath them ; the stones of the wall will speak and reveal his guilt ; the leaves of the forest will become rustling witnesses, and the avenging flash of lightning will descend from the cloudless sky. Be still, saith the Lord, and know that I am God !

Recognize the ruling hand of God. He alone is the Lord, who raiseth up the broken-spirited, who healeth the wounded, who strengtheneth the weak, who comforteth the repining, who protecteth the helpless. Neither in heaven nor on earth is there any such thing as the rule of accident ; there is an all-seeing, wise, loving Power, which guideth all things to good, not along the paths of chance, but according to the eternal law of goodness. Though men may, in the strength of their uncurbed passion, rage hostilely against each other ; though might and cunning may for a time cause error to prevail instead of truth ; though the senseless wishes of an impure and

selfish multitude may run counter to each other: wherefore should ye tremble, O ye of little faith? God rules.

God rules! Therefore that which is hidden will at last come to light, crime will be unmasked, and all evil will meet with its deserts. Therefore only that which is good in itself, and just and true, will eventually conquer and prevail. Has not the experience of the world repeatedly shown how entire nations, swayed by fashion and established custom, have endeavored to stamp error with the impress of truth, and that yet their efforts have proved vain? Have not tyrants on their thrones endeavored, with proud arbitrariness, to make their folly accepted as wisdom, have they not banished truth as treason, and shamefully trodden under foot every right of humanity? Poor impotent sinners! Their dust has been scattered to the winds, their race has been extinguished, only their names survive as monuments of their iniquity. Have not obstinate and selfish rulers sought to force back their people into ignorance and barbarism, that they might the easier be held in the fetters of slavery? But the rulers of the world and their audacious dreams have been destroyed by a breath from the lips of some God-inspired Sage, and mankind has come forth into the light, and the powers of darkness have fallen. Their anathemas, their funeral piles, their dungeons have been in vain. Therefore, Be still, saith the Lord, and know that I am God!

Recognize the rule of God in all thy unfulfilled wishes; recognize it in all thy hopes fulfilled. In regard to both, love has been active for good. For this is the end of creation. Even when thy heart bleeds

most painfully, even when the most sacred bonds are severed, — at the death-bed of husband or wife, parent or child, sister or brother, when it seems to thee as if such death were impossible, as if God could not will it, — when weeping, sobbing in thy solitary chamber thou stretchest up thy arms to heaven, and askest, “Wherefore, ah, wherefore must this be?” — even when the loved one has been taken away at last, and thy every joy in life seems gone, — even then it is God’s hand that ruleth for the good of thy loved one; and — however painfully thy tender and affectionate heart may bleed — for thy good also!

The inner worth and the sincere religiosity of men, is more easily ascertained by the manner in which they contemplate the future, than in the view they take of the present or the past. All men are at length reconciled to the past, and habit enables them to bear with the present: but it is not so easy to look forward with indifference or calmness to that which may come. The more a man fears from the future, the less is the worth of his heart, the less the sincerity and depth of his religiosity. The more cheerfully and trustfully he looks forward to the days that are coming, the purer is his mind, the truer his religion.

For weak, sensuous persons, strongly attached to what is earthly, — persons to whom what they eat and what they drink, their household furniture, their money, their worldly position and the consideration in which they are held by others, are the most important matters, must, of course be more fearful of the future than others, because they have set their hearts on things that must perish. They must tremble in spite of all their trust in God; for they know before-

hand that God will not leave them forever the joys of the senses. Their own consciences tell them that they cling more to what belongs to the dust than to what is divine and eternal : that they value mere worldly appearances more than the virtue that raises us above the world.

The truly God-fearing and God-trusting Christian, on the contrary, looks cheerfully towards the future. It terrifies him not because it may bring punishment for hidden sins ; for he is guiltless, though not faultless. Whatever wrong he may have done he at once endeavors to make amends for. He has done all that man can do, and that a follower of Jesus is bound to do. He looks cheerfully into the future. Whatever God may have ordained, whether it be war or peace, riches or poverty, joyful intercourse with beloved objects, or the death of the latter, — storm or sunshine, — he knows that God rules. And when he sees the dark thunder-cloud rolling towards him, it is God's voice that says to him : Be still, and know that I am God.

Why then should I fear, O Lord, if it be thee, my God, my Father, who sendeth forth the thunder-cloud of fate? Without thy will how can it harm me? And can it be thy will to render me miserable, — me thy child, whom thou hast created and destined for eternal bliss? Thy helpless child, who holds everything he possesses from Thee, O Almighty God? Nay, I feel no uneasiness. I fear not my own death, — for what is death but the dis severing of the bonds of earth, freedom to the immortal soul, union with thee, — what then should I fear? Give or take ; exalt me or abase me : let me be the joy of my friends or fall the victim of mine enemies, — I accept

with thankfulness whatever fate may befall me. For Thou art my Father ; Thy love is my highest good ; virtue my palladium ; all else belongs to the dust and must sink into the grave.

I am still — still and full of trust — trustful and joyful, for I know that Thou art God — my God — forever ! Amen.

THE POWER OF THE CONSCIENCE.

Holy God ! unless a measure
Of thy Spirit fill my heart,
Naught of earth can give me pleasure,
Or a lasting joy impart.

Gold and goods must turn to ashes,
Even while we bid them stay ;
And the bloom of beauty passes,
Hastening onward to decay.

But a conscience, pure and holy,
That no thought of sin can pale,
Sweetens life, however lowly,
Makes e'en death's last terrors fail.

(2 COR. i. 12.)

IN every human breast a mysterious and holy voice speaks at times, and its utterances are understood by all, of whatever religion they may be ; even by the heathen, who accepts not the light of the Gospel. “ Man,” saith this voice, “ be just,” and no flattery, no displeasure, no reasoning, can silence it. Ever and ever it repeats, “ Man, be just ! ”

In vain the skeptic, who mocks at religion, would make himself believe, in his shameless frivolity, that everything is the effect of chance, that piety and faith are but popular superstitions, that Christianity is but a political bridle by which to hold the barbarous masses in check. In vain he refuses to believe in virtue, or believes it to be mere hypocrisy or irrational enthusiasm ; in vain he endeavors to persuade himself that the promptings of prudence, cunning, and self-interest are the highest law ; in vain would he

deny the existence of a God in the infinite creation, of a righteous Judge above the stars,—the inward voice cries, “Man, thou speakest false.” But the earth trembles, and temples and palaces sink into ruins ; friends by his side descend into the grave, and become dust and ashes ; amid a fearful conflict of the elements, the thunder rolls through the heavens, and the lightning flashes, and flames consume his dwelling. The scoffer scoffs no more. “There is a God,” cries the voice within, and in faltering accents he repeats, “There is a God !”

In vain the profligate sneers at the holy voice within his own bosom, and calls it the echo of a nursery tale, a consequence of his education. He imagines himself to be more enlightened than the noblest spirits that have lived. He rises above what he thinks mere prejudice, practices his sins in secret, and looks scornfully around, asking, “Where is the Judge who is to judge me ?” The inward voice cries, “Hide thy sins beneath a world, still sooner or later they will come forth into the sunlight.” In vain he rushes into the turmoil of the world ; he carries the firebrand in his heart,—a firebrand from hell, which secretly consumes him. In vain he strives to free himself from the laws that govern the sacred order of the universe, and according to which only that which is good can prosper, and evil can only generate destruction ; he is carried along by an unknown power, which links him and his deeds to this eternal organization. Destruction springs even from his most secret sins ; he cannot prevent it. He is ever flying from himself ; his whole being is annihilated by unceasing gnawing anxiety, the inward voice is ever crying, “God is omnipresent !” In vain thou persecutest

the truth with slanderous tongue, and strivest to wrest from merit its well-deserved crown. What thy lips traduce, thy heart is forced to honor, even against thy will, and thou endest by heaping upon thyself the contempt of the world. In vain, heartless tyrant, dost thou hunt down the innocent, in order to justify thine own crimes ; in vain dost thou persecute them by means of false oaths and false witnesses, by means of suborned judges, dark dungeons, and cruel tortures ; thou canst not conquer them. They look in thy face with a fearless smile ; they are serene in the midst of the tears forced from them by their sufferings, whilst thou tremblest in the midst of thy triumphs ; they repose full of joy in their dungeon, whilst thou sittest full of dread at the luxurious banquet. Thou mayst drag them to the scaffold, but their death will be their triumph and thy condemnation.

Such is the power of conscience, which, like an invisible angel, is ever present in the assembly of mortals, supporting truth and justice and innocence, though they be deserted by all men ; laying hold of the criminal, though he fly into the most hidden caverns ; and wrestling with the sinner, though he be seated on a throne, or surrounded by armed hosts.

The Divine law, that tells of what is good and true and right, is written in the human heart. Therefore, even in “the heathens, the conscience bears witness, their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or excusing one another.”

The conscience is a teacher. It guides even the most ignorant in the path of right. Let no one endeavor to excuse himself to the world, and still less to himself or to God, the Omniscient, with the pretence

that he knew not how to distinguish between right and wrong.

Conscience teaches it, and conscience is incorruptible and just ! If thou follow this holy voice within that leads to good, thou wilt never willingly go astray, thou wilt never knowingly do evil, and thou wilt ever enjoy internal self-contentment. Listen to the voice of this monitor, however loudly and temptingly thy senses may clamor against it. Listen to its voice, particularly in doubtful cases, when contending desires threaten to mislead thee ; when what thou considerest thy interests cannot perhaps be maintained without injustice to others ; when thou mayst perhaps have it in thy power to do much good, if thy self-interest and self-love will but consent to a sacrifice. Perhaps thou mayst be plotting vengeance against one whom thou hast reason to dislike ; thy conscience says, " Be nobler than he, and put him to shame by thy magnanimity ! " Perhaps lascivious thoughts disturb thy mind, and that carnal lust tempts thee to commit a base act, to vicious indulgence ; thy conscience cries, " Villain, wouldst thou infuse the poison of vice into the bosom of innocence ? Wouldst thou, like Satan, destroy a paradise ? " Perhaps thou covetest another man's property, or perhaps some great advantage, which might be secured by a slight deception ; thy conscience cries, " Hold ! seek not an advantage that would make thee despicable in thine own eyes ! "

For what art thou profited, if thou shalt gain the whole world and lose thine own soul ? Perhaps thy vanity tempts thee to amuse thyself and others by exercising thy wit in making another person appear ridiculous ; thy conscience cries, " Bold and licentious

tongue, how soon wouldst thou not become silent, were he whom thou art mocking to draw near."

The conscience is an earnest and just teacher; and only in following its hints and warnings canst thou find true happiness. Do not persuade thyself that it is otherwise; seek not by subtle reasoning to find the means of satisfying thy forbidden wishes and vicious tendencies, without violating thy sense of right and of decency. Thy reasonings are false. It is an evil deed that thou art tempted to commit, and behind it lurks secret remorse. The conscience admits of no compromise. Thou thinkest that thou canst bargain with it; but, weak man, thou art only bargaining with thine own shame.

The conscience is a teacher endowed with divine authority. It says: "Do this, and avoid that, *for it is right*, and *because it is right*, and not because it may be to thy advantage, or it may bring down shame upon thee. Thou must do what is right and good because it is so, and without reference to anything else. Thou must do it even should it not be conducive to thy worldly interests. Thou must do it even should it be injurious to these." Thus speaks thy conscience, O man, and thus speaks Jesus Christ. For if thou doest that only which is of use to thee, then thou hast thy reward. (Matt. vi. 1, 2.) Thou art prudent and calculating, but not virtuous.

The conscience also warns! All men have failed, and whosoever has failed has heard the warning voice of the inward judge.

Even as children, when engaged in play, or in trifling household occupations, we feel a certain misgiving when we allow ourselves to be led by our own evil propensities, or by tempting examples, to the commission of some wrong.

How violently does not every heart beat before the intended performance of an evil deed. The thief feels it before he stretches out his hand towards property that is not his ; the voluptuary feels it before he stammers forth the tempting words ; the perjurer feels it before he opens his lips to utter the false oath ; the traitor feels it when, driven by covetousness or vengeance, he goes forth to betray his friend, his country, or those in authority over him. With fearful earnestness the conscience warns them of their sin, and the nearer the time for its consummation draws, the more earnestly the admonishing voice is raised.

The struggle of a man with himself, before he makes the first step towards an evil deed, the conflict with his expostulating conscience, is, as it were, a conflict with his good angel, who is attempting to hold him back and to save him from falling. Alas ! in vain are the touching appeals of the angel. The deed is done. The angel draws back in sorrow and silence. The sinner falls from bad to worse, and ever more sorrowfully, ever fainter sounds the voice of the heavenly messenger, who is withdrawing from him.

Behold yon uncorrupted youth : he is about to practice his first deception. He endeavors to speak, but his tongue refuses to obey. He walks, and his steps are uneven and faltering. His inward confusion appears in every movement. He endeavors to lift up to you his eyes, which used ever to gaze fearlessly into yours ; but he can no longer encounter the look of the righteous ; he dreads lest you may discover the uneasiness of his conscience. As yet he is only wavering, this former favorite of all good people ;

he still blushes with shame at his unworthy self. Were he to look into the glass, he would loathe the sight of himself. Young men who have hitherto held fast the jewel of a pure heart, and who in its strength have walked freely and proudly through the world, while old men in their corruption have envied you, and you, tender-hearted daughters of excellent parents, oh, listen to the warning voice of your good angel, so that it may never abandon you! Bear the sweet innocence of your youth unspotted through the world in spite of its vices and immoralities. Bear it unsullied in your bosoms even in mature manhood, when you shall be fathers of families, or wives and mothers; oh, you will have your reward, for you will be bringing the heaven of your childhood over into the days of your old age.

Young man, behold the enervated profligate, who has wasted the blessing of health, and is staggering towards an early grave; behold the dishonorable villain, who knows not what happiness is, though surrounded by the riches which he has acquired by unfair means, because to such ever clings a curse; behold the murderer, who in his passion slew his brother, now tottering, pale and terrified, to meet his judge.

O daughter; behold the fallen maiden, whose life, which has become a dishonor to her family, is consumed by secret sorrow because she listened too thoughtlessly to the seducer; behold yon mother, despised by her own children, because of her avarice, her disorder, and her coarseness, — all these unhappy beings once felt the warnings of conscience as you feel them, yet dared to set them at naught.

The conscience punishes. The good angel flees

when the wrong has been committed ; but the evil angel awakens, and with him suffering. Instead of the wonted cheerfulness, fear now takes possession of the heart. Never yet did thistles bring forth good fruit, and never yet has an evil action led to good. Thou mayst perhaps succeed in concealing thy misdeed for years, but its consequences reach through eternity, and will one day betray thee. An accident, an event which thou hast never anticipated, will, at a time when least of all thou wouldst have expected it, bring thy shame to light. Thou canst never more feel secure. The old and terrific proverb is but too true : “ Ne’er was thread so finely spun, that it doth not at last meet the eye of the sun.” And in your case also it will be verified.

Could we look into the hearts of men, we should see many an individual, when alone, tortured by his bad conscience, feeling as if he were abandoned by God and man, and deeply despising himself ; we should see how every recollection of an upright character reminds him of his own degradation ; how the most harmless word spoken by another may pierce his heart like a dagger ; how the apparently most insignificant circumstance will startle him out of his hardly won feeling of security. Verily, the pain caused by the serpent-tooth of remorse far outweighs any gratification that may have been felt in the hour of sin.

The tortures of an evil conscience embitter every pleasure. And even should the evil-doer succeed in stifling its voice during the distractions of the day, at night the consciousness of his misdeeds stands like a ghost by his bedside. He longs for sleep, but the remembrance haunts his dreams. Manifold and great are the sufferings to which man is subject, but

the most terrible of all is remorse. It hates the light of day, which may reveal its cause, and shudders at the darkness, in which treachery may be lurking. It shuns solitude, where the memory of the misdeed speaks the loudest, and flies from society that it may not betray its own secret.

The heart conscious of guilt is ever anticipating with trembling the moment when its secret will cease to be one. But the pain of this constant fear and of its never-ceasing self-reproaches at length reaches such a point, that the sinner, in order to escape from these torments of hell, comes forward and confesses his guilt. How many a murderer has been thus tortured until he has gone before a magistrate and confessed his crime! How many a deceiver has been stretched on the bed of death, seemingly unable to die, until he had made amends to the person he had deceived, or to his children.

Such is the mighty power of the conscience! It may for a time be lulled to sleep, but it can never be entirely destroyed; and the later it awakens, the more dreadful it is. The sinner becomes a prey to remorse, he reaps the fruit of his shame, even though it be not before he finds himself on the very brink of the grave, into which, in his hopeless despair, he fears to descend.

The conscience rewards! And its rewards are as divine as the vengeance of betrayed virtue is terrible.

He who has a clean conscience sees friends in all whom he meets. He avoids no one; he has no reason to shun any one. He pities the vicious and the criminal; he loves the righteous, and to all he is open and candid. His mind is ever cheerful. Each

pleasure that the passing hour may give he enjoys in full draughts, and when misfortune overtakes him he bears it with manly courage, strengthened by the feeling that he is worthy of a better fate, and that his sufferings are not owing to his own fault, and that God is with him.

Behold persecuted innocence : supported by the pride of a pure conscience, it leaves the palace which is the abode of injustice, and chooses in preference the beggar's staff ; with divine calm like that of Jesus in Gethsemane, it addresses its persecutors in his words, and says, " I am He that ye seek ! " No earthly shame can diminish its dignity, no sufferings can deprive it of its heavenly peace. To it the dark prison is converted into a place of bliss, when it mounts the scaffold it celebrates the greatest triumph ; and humanity weeps above its tomb.

A man who can act with a cheerful and easy conscience is trusted by high and low. He is quite independent, and may stand forth like a prince, though clad in the garb of poverty. Whoever knows him honors him ; and he stands without fear before the throne as before the judgment-seat, and looks death steadfastly in the face.

A good conscience is a heaven in the heart, it gives power over the evil-minded, is a protector in need, a sheet-anchor in the storms of life, and smooths the pillow of death.

Holy, holy God ! Oh, may this indescribable peace of a good conscience be mine evermore ! May I never have cause to blush for my actions before Thee, or before my fellow-men. May I never know the terrors of a guilty conscience, never feel the serpent-tooth of remorse gnawing at my heart ! May

I walk through life innocent, and pure, and with childlike simplicity !

I am weak, it is true, and I am conscious of my weakness. Perhaps I may in my thoughtlessness allow myself to be in some measure misled ; perhaps I may, in the strength of passion, forget for a moment Thy holy will ! If so, then, O then, my conscience, be thou the guardian of my virtue, my innocence, and my peace ! May the divine sentiments of the true and the noble ever guide me, so that I may not become unworthy of myself, so that I may not fall away from God, or from Thee, O Jesus, my Heavenly Teacher, through whose Spirit I will sanctify myself.

Not all the sweetness of a forbidden deed or wish can compensate for the pangs of never-ceasing fear, and inevitable self-contempt ; the evanescent pleasure of a moment, enjoyed with anxious heart, can afford no compensation for long hours of remorse.

No, no, my God and Heavenly Father ! Not in vain hast thou implanted in my bosom this judge of my thoughts, my words, and my deeds. The voice of conscience is Thy voice : how then can I refuse to listen to it ? Nay, however much it may cost me to curb my evil passions, to restrain my impure desires, — in Thy hearing, O my God, I make a solemn promise that I will remain pure and free from reproach ; I will rather endure the scoffs of the world, poverty, hunger, misery, nay, even death itself, than bear the burden of one evil deed, which dishonors me in mine own eyes. What is man's scorn to me, if I can look up fearlessly to Thee ? If I have but Thy approval, the bliss of heaven is already mine.

Oh, may these sentiments and resolutions, which

now already spread such sweet joy through my heart, never vanish from my memory ! How joyfully may I then receive the happiness of life from Thy hand ; how cheerfully shall I then meet all that may befall me ; how hopefully shall I close my eyes in death when called !

PEACE IN JESUS.

Thy wisdom, Jesus, thine alone,
Can wake the blind to see;
Creation's call by it made known,
Tuned nature's praise to Thee;
And by its holy teaching led,
On life's dark dream the day was shed,
And the Creator shown.

Then dwell with us, and let thy light
Glow on in peace divine,
That by its ray, through error's night,
Unveiled, thy truth may shine.
From forth thy temple let it stream,
To house, or lowly cot, the gleam,
Bring joy, for it is thine.

(JOHN XVI. 33.)

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world!"

THUS spake Jesus to his disciples. How am I to understand the words of the Holy Teacher of mankind?

He says that He has spoken and taught that in Him we may have peace. Peace *in Him*, — that is to say, in his spirit, not in his body, — in his magnanimous and holy principles, in his relations to the Deity and to the world, which ought to become our principles and our relations also. We are to have peace in Him; but with whom are we to be at peace? For where peace is to be established, hostility must have existed. We are to be at peace with God the Father, the Holy of holies; with our eternal destination; with ourselves.

Peace in Jesus is the glorification on earth of the human spirit by its own endeavors and through the power of faith, or of the religion of Jesus. And our spirit is glorified when it purifies itself from the dross of earthly evil which clings to it, as it were, and obscures the Divine image in which it is created. This glorification is effected by the victorious coming forth of the spirit out of the slough of common cares, common wishes, common desires, and of all those low appetites which are at war with its divinity. The spirit, being from God, knows full well what it is that dims its purity and destroys its dignity. And even when it allows itself to be led in slavish chains by the animal desires of the body, by the angry passions, the ambition and the envy of the heart, it feels ashamed of its bondage. Even in the lowest criminals, in robbers and murderers, there is, as it were, a yearning of the spirit after purity, freedom, and likeness to God. However deeply it may be sunk in mere animal life, and however completely it may have forgotten all else, its own high origin it never forgets, and therefore neither does it forget what it ought to be, and what it might be.

The deep flush of shame that colors the cheek of one who is conscious of his own evil-doings, and who fears detection, — what is this but the noble indignation of the spirit at its own degradation? The casting down of the eyes of those who know that they are guilty, — what is it but the sign of the self-contempt and self-accusation of the spirit, which cannot entirely conquer its yearning after likeness with God? The anxiety felt by the unjust, the fear that tortures the criminal, the endeavors of the sinner to conceal his shame, are so many indications of the

silent indignation of the degraded spirit, and its protest against the sins that dim its lustre. All the sophistry of animal man is insufficient entirely to brutalize himself, and to make him forgetful of his divine origin. In spite of all, the voice of his higher being speaks loudly and mightily within him. The conscience is the tongue of the spirit.

And the spirit shall know no peace until it has conquered. Every submission to the power of the sensual being increases its misery. Who has not heard that in many cases men steeped in sin, and who have lacked the courage to raise themselves out of it, have at length found their own degraded condition so intolerable, that they have preferred to die, rather than live on in this state of dreadful enmity with themselves?

We shall know no peace until we have conquered the violence of those passions and desires that cause our misery, — those passions and desires, the non-satisfaction of which keeps us in a state of constant discontent, and the gratification of which by no means promises lasting happiness, nay, in many cases, can only be followed by bitter repentance. And peace is only to be obtained in Jesus, in his great and divine principles.

If our spirits would again draw nigh to God, — if the Eternal Father of Light is to recognize in us his children, created in his image, — we must seek to attain the candor, the innocence, of Jesus, and his power of renouncing all that is of this world only. This is peace in Christ! And without this there is no happiness in happiness, no peace in peace!

“In the world ye shall have tribulation,” said Jesus; and is there any one who does not feel that his

experience testifies to the truth of these words? Here on earth we have no rest. Everything that surrounds us is pressing tumultuously towards the last resting-point, the threshold of eternity. Everything changes; everything varies; the days pass by, and the end of all things draws nigh.

In the world ye shall have tribulation. Was there ever a mortal who could boast of having secured perfect happiness? If there be one among us who has really obtained the object of his wishes, — who has acquired great riches, received a lucrative appointment or distinguished honors, who has triumphed over his adversaries, succeeded in forming a much-desired connection, or in securing retirement from the storms of the world, — and who, in the first moment of exceeding joy, exclaims: “Now I am quite happy! Now I have not another wish!” — how long will this delight last? In a few hours, already it begins to subside; after a few days, it is superseded by calm; after a few weeks, by coldness. Habit engenders indifference. He begins to discover the thorns that belong to the rose, that every joy has its pain, and that light has its shade. New wishes arise, new views are adopted, and soon come new anxieties also. Improved circumstances have brought new cares and new tribulation. There is no lasting peace on earth.

In the world ye will have tribulation. For the world means those earthly things with which the spirit can have nothing in common. The nature of the spirit is quite other. In vain it seeks comfort or happiness in the world. It never finds either. Thence its tribulation. It aspires to something better, and this aspiration remains unsatisfied until it leaves this world. Man can never satisfy this yearn-

ing for a better state as long as he looks down into the world, and not up into God's heaven, where is his home. He can never satisfy this yearning as long as he does not learn to know himself, as long as he continues to look upon himself as an animal more than as a spirit. He can never satisfy this yearning as long as he seeks his highest happiness in what the world can give; for it dwells not there. The ambitious find it not in the highest honors; the voluptuary finds it not in the gratification of his impure desires; the glutton finds it not in abundance of good cheer; the drunkard, not in the costliest wine; the covetous, not in his heaped-up gold. For when each has obtained that for which he has labored, for which he has sacrificed his rest, he has at the utmost secured momentary gratification of his earthly, animal desires, but not happiness, not the fulfillment of all his wishes, — because out of that which he has obtained arise new wants, new desires, new anxieties. And the further he proceeds in this false path, the further he deviates from the road that leads to the true goal of the spirit, to all that is divine; in other words, the oftener he is induced to satisfy his desires by unrighteous means, the greater is his tribulation. Peace he finds not.

Therefore spake Jesus, the searcher of the human heart, the heavenly messenger who came to bring true happiness: "In the world ye will have tribulation."

But he said also, "Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." He overcame the world by throwing the light of eternal truth on all that belongs to the flesh and to sin, and showing men that therein they could find no lasting happiness. He overcame the world, not for Himself, but for the whole race of

spirits prone to sin. He overcame the world by lifting up our spirits above that which is merely earthly and transient.

As in each individual human being the rational spirit ought to be elevated above the animal wants of the body, and ought to control the passions and desires which are in opposition to reason and conscience: so the true place occupied by the great realm of spirits is between the earthly world and God. Thousands of gradations fill the immense interval between the dust and the Deity. Some one of these, be it higher, or be it lower, is occupied by the spirits. The more sensual a man is, the more he clings to the pleasures of this world, the more unscrupulous he is in satisfying his sinful desires, the lower he stands, the farther he is from God; the nearer he is to the animal. The more perfectly the human spirit masters itself, the more power it evinces in resisting that which is forbidden, in suppressing animal desires which pollute its consciousness, the more capable it is of noble self-sacrifice for the benefit of others, the purer, the more exalted, the happier it is, and the nearer to its origin, to God, the Father of Light.

This is the great error of men, that they fail to understand themselves, and the yearning after better things that ever dwells in their hearts; and they descend towards evil, instead of ascending towards truth, justice, and holiness. "In the world ye will have tribulation;" only in adopting the meek, just, and holy spirit of Jesus will ye find peace. The less you demand of the world, the more happiness will flow into your spirits from above. The less you are concerned about the comforts of life, about the attainment of worldly honors, about the acquisition of

wealth, about the enjoyment of vain pleasures, — the more you strive to be honest, candid, content with little, free from all reproach, and useful to your fellow-men, — the more certainly will you be preparing for yourselves a happiness, independent of all accidents, a peace of mind that no outward storms can disturb. This is peace in Jesus. And it is in order that we may have peace in Him, that his revelations and teachings have been vouchsafed to us. He is the light that illumineth our path: He, that is to say, his Holy Spirit, is the way of truth and of life, that leads to God. Through our faults and our sins we are in conflict with God. Without God there is no peace, and through Jesus we find God. Therefore is He called the Reconciler, the Redeemer, the Saviour. O Prince of Spirits, Son of God, who came into this earthly life to seek out thy brethren, that Thou mightst restore to them the peace of God, their childlike relation to the Father of all spirits, and their union with Him. Thou thoughtest of me also! There is no salvation for me, save in Thee; no peace on earth or on high, save in Thee.

In vain will be my endeavors to alter my earthly relations, to improve my position, as long as my whole life and being are more bound up with the world than with Thee. For in the world, and in all that I demand of it, there is tribulation. Even the joy of parents in their children, even the delights of friendship, even the transports of pure love, cause tribulation. For whatever belongs to this world must pass away. Loving parents must part from their children, and faithful hearts break in death.

But Thou hast overcome the world, — in Thee is peace. Therefore will I also overcome the world, and

seek rest and peace in Thee! And even though loving hearts break in death, I know that spirits do not die, and that their love lives on with them. It is not the dust, not the fleshly covering that is important: and not the dust, but the spirit should the spirit embrace.

O Light of my life, illuminate for me the path that leads to God, the eternal source of all light. May I never stray from Thee; for in Thee only is there virtue and peace. Should I be a prey to anxiety and care, to remorse, vexation, and tormenting desires, I shall know that I am not in Thee, but in the world; that I am at war with my better self, with Thee, and with God; and I will turn back from my errors to Thy truth. He who thinks and acts in thy spirit is in Thee, and has eternal life. Oh, help me to attain it! Amen.

HOW IS THE CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE OF GROWTH IN PERFECTION TO BE CAR- RIED OUT IN DAILY LIFE?

FIRST MEDITATION.

When in my purpose I rejoice
Thy steadfast follower to be,
Grant that I oft renew my choice,
To love Thee, Lord, and only Thee.
And while inspired with holy zeal,
Make me to practice what I feel.

That I may sooner reach the goal,
Oh, ne'er let sin my time divide,
With Thee, my God; take Thou the whole —
Then shall no hour to Thee denied,
No needed service left undone,
Accuse me, Lord, before thy throne.

Let all the treasures I possess,
My strength, my goods, with joy be given,
Mankind, and so myself, to bless;
So shall I live for God and Heaven;
So grow into perfection. — Thine
The praise, O God! — the blessing mine.

(JOHN xii. 26.)

IT is not uncommon for people at the commencement of a New Year to determine to adopt higher principles, to change their mode of life, and to become, as it were, new beings with the new year. They are in earnest, and renew their resolutions at the commencement of many a day and many a week. They may, perhaps, even succeed in remaining faithful to their resolves for some short period. They may for a time seek and find peace within and without by

conquering themselves. But gradually their zeal cools. As they become more immersed in the business of life, the good resolves which they formed are thrown into the shade. They find it more convenient, and even think it necessary, to adopt again the former tone, to recommence their former mode of life. By the time the year has gone by, they have returned to the point from whence they started.

Many persons are very ready, when imprudence or any of their pet faults have led them into difficulties, solemnly to renounce in their hearts the special sin that has caused their uneasiness. They recognize with almost exaggerated earnestness that the enjoyment derived from the fulfilment of passionate desires is not worth the anxiety and grief that follow. But the trouble and difficulty pass away ; the repentant sinners recover their repose of mind ; they are once more able to enjoy, and lo, gradually they yield again to the evil tendency, though cunningly refraining from extremes. They remain evil-minded as before, and, notwithstanding all their prudence, prepare anew for themselves hours of suffering which they might easily have avoided.

Many, again, who are really earnestly bent upon self-improvement, when praying to God, when engaged in solitary meditation, shudder at their own perverseness and iniquity, and are abashed to find that with all their good-will they have not made greater progress in goodness. In solitude they are excellent, and full of benevolent feelings ; but when they mix with other men, and are engaged in their ordinary avocations, they become different beings, and, however hard they may try, they find it impossible to be in all places and at all times the same.

Is there one of us who has not felt this? Is there one of us who has not often experienced that we seem inspired by a different spirit when in solitude or retirement, and when in the midst of the busy turmoil of life? Only look at the congregation when assembled in the house of God! What earnestness, what solemn stillness and devotion in all! Who would believe that the hearts of these people, assembled to pay unanimous homage to the Father of their being, will beat in enmity towards each other, as soon as they shall have crossed the threshold of the temple? Who would believe that these same eyes, now so reverently cast down before the Omnipresent, in daily life, beyond the walls of the sanctuary, frequently look down with pride and disdain on their fellow-men? Who would believe that the very lips which are here giving utterance to pious prayers, or are pouring forth solemn hymns of devotion, could at other times give vent to slander and contempt, to malignant observations and base flattery, to falsehood and deception? In the temple of God all seem full of virtue and holiness, while in the outer world they are a prey to passions and vices. In the temple all seem to belong to eternity, in their daily life to this world only.

What a contrast! What self-deception, what false appearances! And yet the picture is but too true; who can deny it?

Almost every human being is consequently in contradiction with himself. In one place he sins, in another he repents. At length, disheartened, and discontented with himself, he despairs of the possibility of reaching that perfection which Jesus demands of him, which God wills that he should attain, and

which his own conscience tells him that he ought to attain.

Then, finding this inward strife intolerable, he begins to comfort himself with false reasonings. He says to himself: "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak; the will to do right I have, but the power to carry out my will fails me. It is impossible to become a saint in this life already. Every human being must have some failings. God will not demand more of man than he is capable of rendering. It is not possible that amid the business transactions, and the ordinary dealings and distractions of life, we should always be able to remember the duties which religion imposes upon us; it is not possible that in our intercourse with persons of various characters we can always be thinking of God and of eternity, and of the solemn promises that we have made! Either we must deny our own nature, and become dreamers though living in the world, or we must retire into solitude, where we have nothing to do but to meditate upon religion."

Such attempts at self-justification are very common among men. We may hear such reasonings every day whenever conversation turns on these subjects. Yet those who utter them cannot but feel that they may serve to excuse the frivolous and the bad, as well as the truly upright. They are uttered before men, and perhaps repented of before God. For it is not thus that our conscience speaks, and Jesus tells us: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honor." (John xii. 26.)

But how am I to reconcile this difference between

my will and my acts? How am I as a Christian, that is to say, as a truly wise man, consistently to maintain my principles amid the bustle of every-day life?

This question is one of the utmost importance as regards my spiritual welfare, and deserves my earnest attention; for upon the mode in which I answer it depends the virtue and the happiness of my life. However, it is a difficult question to answer, or at least seems so. Were it otherwise, why should so many still be the prey of this contradiction between their good resolves and their worthless actions? Were it otherwise, why should so few make a hearty beginning to carry out in daily life principles which they cannot but approve?

It is because the good resolutions which we form in solitude, when engaged in prayer, or during public worship, or immediately after some serious event in life, are the fruits of strong emotion, and not of calm and mature reflection. When our hearts are touched, everything seems easy; afterwards, when we have to put our resolves into execution, it is otherwise. When we are under the influence of strong feeling, the world appears to us in a very different light from that in which it presents itself when we are less excited. Therefore as soon as the emotion has subsided and the mind recovers its usual composure, we begin to perceive that things are not such as we fancied during the moments of excitement, and cannot be so easily effected; that we cannot adapt the world to our feelings, but that we must adapt our feelings to the world.

Our mistake is therefore this, that we make our resolves to reform, to become nobler beings, more

worthy of ourselves and of God, during moments of enthusiasm, or of fear and contrition. For all strong emotions are evanescent, and with them vanishes the strength of the great resolve. We are much more likely to carry out what we have previously calmly and deeply pondered upon. For the power of understanding, exercised in reflection, ever remains with us, whereas mere emotion soon subsides.

Many who believe that they will be able to remain faithful to the resolutions formed in moments of solemn mental agitation, but who feel, on the other hand, that they are likely to meet with numerous obstacles in the common walks of life, withdraw as much as possible from the so-called turmoil of the world, and form a new life for themselves. Carefully avoiding all gayety, they endeavor to maintain constantly an equable and calm state of mind, and try to awaken in themselves as often as possible the sacred emotions that have led to their desire for reformation. For this reason they pray frequently, assume a tone and manner indicative of contempt for the world, its hopes and wishes, shun as sinful all amusements, however innocent they may be, neglect no opportunity of going to church, and speak ever in a devout tone,—observing all these rules even when their minds are in a state utterly at variance with them, and when pursuing avocations quite incompatible with such feelings.

What is the result? A habit of outward decorum and piety; a canting play with feelings, images, and modes of expression; and finally, very frequently an extravagant enthusiasm which remains barren as far as the fruits of an active Christian life are concerned, and such as was never inculcated by Jesus, who sent

out his disciples on active errands of usefulness among the people ; or else a system of passive hypocrisy, in which language, manner, and pious exercises are but too often in direct contradiction with what is passing in the heart and mind.

The holy religion of Jesus nowhere admonishes to such a life, to such retirement, to such constant assumption of pious demeanor, when we are inclined to enjoy with light hearts the good gifts of God ; to such praying and devotional retirement when not moved thereto in our inmost souls. Nay, Christ demands that our prayers shall not be learnt by rote, shall not be long and tedious, shall not be a mere thoughtless utterance of words. He commands us to take an active and useful part in real life. He did not condemn those who endeavored diligently to promote the good of the world. He did not demand of kings and of the great men of the earth, that, instead of attending to the wants of the people confided to their keeping, they should withdraw from the world, shun all pomp, and only give themselves up to prayer. Nay, Jesus knew the world, and yet He sent his disciples out into it. He knew how much persecution and suffering they would be exposed to, yet He would not that they should grow effeminate, but encouraged them, saying : " I send you forth like lambs unto wolves : but fear not, and put your faith in the Heavenly Father."

Therefore, let no one torment himself with doubts as to the possibility of his progressing in perfection, because he cannot at once put into practice all that which, in moments when his heart is deeply moved, he promises himself that he will do. Let him not think himself incapable of improvement because his

most noble emotions are but transient. He has only been mistaken as to the means of improvement he has trusted in. He has endeavored to render constant and permanent feelings which in their nature are fleeting, and has forgotten that, in domestic as in public life, man can only carry into effect that which he has calmly matured within himself, and the adaptation of which to surrounding circumstances he has well calculated.

But there is another reason which is also frequently the cause of our despairing too soon of our capacity to remain faithful to our best resolutions: this is, that we undertake too much at a time, and more than it is possible we should ever accomplish.

Thus, for instance, in some solitary hour of meditation, we determine to conquer every passion which occasionally leads us to evil. As long as we are alone, as long as no one irritates us, as long as our minds remain calm, it seems very easy to resolve never again to be angry, never to entertain feelings of hatred, never to listen to the temptings of the senses. But one step out into the real world, and everything is changed. Our desires are again awakened, our passions are again aroused. We cannot help resuming our former mode of action towards other men. We are even provoked by them into being far worse than we would desire to be. This is but a natural consequence of our constitution, — frequently of the state of the body, of the nature of the temperament, or of the condition of health. We cannot possibly prevent our feelings and passions from being roused, for they are as much part of our being as is every breath we draw. We cannot possibly remain so cold and apathetic as to be able to

look with indifference on everything that surrounds or befalls us. Neither does Jesus demand this of us. Even He did not look with indifference on the money-changers and traders who desecrated the temple, or on the hypocritical proceedings of the Pharisees. But by the strength of our will we can prevent the passions which dwell in us, and which have their source in our temperament, from taking an evil direction. How to do this, Jesus teaches us by word and by example.

It follows from this, that to require the total annihilation of all our desires and passions would be an unnatural demand, which would be contrary to the ends of the Deity, and which must destroy either our health or our active piety. To renounce the pleasures of life is to disdain the sweet gifts of God, which He has bestowed for our happiness. To shun men and seek solitude is indeed one means of lulling to sleep the passions which awaken in the bustle of the world; but such renunciation of the world is a renunciation of all the good which we are called by God's will and the example of Jesus to perform. The lifeless stone cannot indeed sin; but is it therefore virtuous? The man who retires into solitude to pray and to subdue his passions, while others labor for him, and take care of him, — is he not a very useless member of human society? Is he not like unto the servant in the Gospel of whom Jesus spoke, who buried his talent instead of making it fruitful in further blessings? And if even the health of the body escape entire destruction by such unnatural abstinence and self-annihilation, are there not many other passions that will remain, and against which neither praying nor fasting can avail? Does not the unnatural state

thus induced, on the contrary, very often lead to far more unnatural and sinful intemperance?

When the Eternal Creator called man into life, He spake, "It is not good that man should be alone," and "In the sweat of his brow he shall eat his bread." Can it have been the intention of the Eternal Son to change the order of the creation and the decrees of the Divine Ruler of the universe?

Not so! We were created to live for each other, and therefore with each other. We were created with various capacities and powers, in order that we might serve each other in many ways. Jesus, the Divine Enlightener of the world, his disciples, the early Christians in the first century, did not fly to the desert to escape the turmoil of the world, but entered manfully into life, endeavoring to spread the holy kingdom of God, each one according to his capacity, his power, and his opportunity.

The doubts of many persons as to the possibility of their attaining to a high degree of religious perfection in this world thus evidently spring from the false views which they take of life, and many a time good intentions have failed to be carried out because they were either merely the result of strong and therefore unenduring emotions, or because they were at variance with human nature.

And yet God has called us to glory! And yet Jesus has admonished us, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect!" And yet our own conscience warns us to improve our inward worth! Is it possible to believe that all these sacred voices should join in demanding the impossible?

Many mortals, indeed, who, held captive in the chains of their sensuality, find the exercise of all

higher virtue burdensome, are apt to look upon the lower grades of perfection even as impossible of attainment. Such sybarites, however, who live only for riches and honors, and for the enjoyments and consideration of society, and who avoid every effort towards mental and moral improvement, seek merely to justify their own weakness. To such as these no wise man would listen; and even their own conscience rejects the false reasonings with which they endeavor to pacify it.

Thy yoke is sweet, O Saviour of the world, O Enlightener of all spirits, and thy burden is light! Why, then, being thy disciple, should I despair of becoming one day like unto Thee? Why should I despair of one day carrying out the good resolutions which I form? Should I, even at times, yielding to my weaknesses, leave the right path, and sink on the way, wilt not Thou, O merciful One, also be merciful unto me? Even the righteous may fail, but they fail against their will. Even the most upright, the noblest of men, are liable to error and rashness; but when they stumble, they only rise up the more determined never to fall again; they only endeavor the more zealously to make amends for their fault by acts of charity and goodness,—to atone for their momentary dereliction by a long series of virtuous actions.

O Spirit of Holiness, enlighten my soul, that I may choose the true path of the Christian; and give me strength and courage to lead a life of godliness in the midst of the pressure and turmoil of the world, until my goal be reached! Amen.

HOW IS THE CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE OF GROWTH IN PERFECTION TO BE CAR- RIED OUT IN DAILY LIFE ?

SECOND MEDITATION.

Grant me a way, O Lord, and Saviour mine,
Thy praise to show, and prove that I am thine, —
Help me when sin allures with promise fair,
To shun the snare.

Let good-will strengthen me for others' needs,
And time and place still serve for noble deeds,
That piously the work of love be done,
As 't was begun.

Courage and zeal thy will and work demand,
Oh! may the timid pretext never stand,
That for *thy* purposes my strength may quail,
Or due time fail!

Yes, I will learn to rule this stubborn clay,
Will drive temptation's false delights away,
So that I daily over every sin
New strength may win.

(LUKE ix. 23.)

THE pious emotions awakened in hours of devotion or repentance, or on occasion of great and serious events, are not indeed to be held light. They strengthen the power of our souls, and promote the desire and the resolution to do good.

Yet, neither in divine things nor in worldly matters must we allow the feelings of the heart to bear sway. He who rests his virtue on feeling only chooses a very fragile staff. Our feelings in them-

selves depend much less upon the strength of the mind than on the constitution of the body ; and how many changes is not the latter subject to ! How variable are not our daily moods !

Persons who are of a very sensitive nature, and so prone to strong feelings that these assume, in a great measure, a permanent character, run great risk of becoming one-sided in their judgments of men and of life in its various aspects, and are apt to look upon all those who feel less strongly than themselves as hard and cold, and wanting in goodness of heart.

The longer a man allows his feelings this power over his judgment and his entire life, the more false does his view of the world become ; and his understanding and his reason are eventually as injuriously affected by it, in the same manner as they would be if he allowed similar preponderance to his lower or animal passions. Pious emotions, when allowed to warp the judgment, degenerate into barren enthusiasm, and the wisdom contained in the teachings of Jesus is degraded into a religion of the imagination. A man who, having allowed his feelings to grow and to strengthen at the expense of all his other mental faculties, and who has thus come to believe that he has attained the loftiest height of human magnanimity, and that the rest of the world is sunk in darkness, unbelief, and vice, — such a man is sick in soul.

And if the poor creature turn dizzy on the pinnacle on which he has placed himself, he has but to make one step more and he will probably be plunged into total mental darkness, be given up to visions and miracles, to mysticism and prophesying, or to irreligiosity and total unbelief. For, unhappily, the world affords too many examples of how quick is the tran-

sition in such minds, and how frequently some insignificant circumstance that convinces them of the self delusion which they have so long been practicing suffices to destroy all their previous convictions, — if, indeed, that can be termed conviction which springs exclusively from the feelings. Thus it has always been found that the most senseless, mischievous, and wanton scoffers at religion have, in their earlier years, been religious enthusiasts; and, on the other hand, that irreligious persons, after having run through every possible extravagance, are apt to become sanctimonious devotees in old age. The same cause is at work in both cases. These persons, naturally of an emotional temperament, have allowed their feelings unchecked dominion.

But, O man, not thy heart is immortal, — this will decay in the grave with thy body, — thy spirit only is so! Not thy feelings are immortal, — these will pass away with the heart in which they have their source, — only the strength and power of thy spirit is so! Therefore, the feelings of the heart must not be permitted to usurp the dominion over the searching and testing spirit, but must be no more than its assistants and handmaidens.

The religion of Jesus is not a mere play of feelings, but a work of the Spirit for immortal spirits. So also the Deity doth not abide in emotions, but in the highest knowledge of truth, justice, and perfection. God is a spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. But to elicit truth is the work of reason, with which God endowed us that we might discover it.

The lessons which the disciples of Jesus received from their Divine Master, and which they were to

practice in life, had not reference to the feelings alone, but to principles, to deeply studied truths. And when I make the great resolve to be in future a more exalted spirit, to strive after likeness to God, after perfection, this ought not to be the effect of some pious emotion only, but of calm and earnest reflection.

When a man intends to sketch out a plan of some great and important undertaking relative to worldly matters, he first weighs and examines calmly and carefully what means will be most likely to help him to achieve his object; considers the circumstances amid which he will have to act; measures the extent of his own powers in respect of the undertaking; and even calculates the obstacles which he may possibly have to encounter, and ponders beforehand on the best means of overcoming them.

And wouldst thou act more thoughtlessly, and with less consideration in matters relating to divine things, to the well-being of thy immortal spirit, than to such as concern only thy worldly affairs? Or dost thou think that the elevating, perfecting, and sanctifying of thy soul require less effort and reflection than the increase of thy revenue, or of the consideration in which thou art held by the world?

And if it be thy lofty purpose as a Christian to carry out thy principles in daily life, and really to draw nearer every day to that perfection which God, and Jesus, and thine own better self, demand of thee: then make thy resolution after mature consideration of all that is required to carry it into effect. A lively emotion may give the first impulse to this resolution; but the spark will soon die out, if the spirit do not fan it into a flame, in which it will itself be purged and purified.

Do not begin by making a solemn promise to God that thou wilt at once become a holier being, and that thou wilt conquer all thy faults and all thy passions ; for experience ought to have taught thee ere this, that thou wilt be unable to fulfill this rash promise.

On the contrary, ask thyself first : Wherein am I most faulty ? Which are the defects in my character which more especially lead me to commit unjust acts ? And which is the one among these defects which is most injurious to myself and to others ? Thou wilt never have any difficulty in discovering these faults, for thy conscience, that is to say, the sacred though faint voice of thy spirit which is yearning for perfection, will aid thee in detecting them.

Then inquire further : “ Whence comes this defect ? Is it owing to my early education ? Or is it a consequence of the power of outward things over me ? Or the effect of my temperament ? Or is it, perhaps, caused by a still more deep-seated or concealed passion, or the result of some bad habit indulged in till it has become, as it were, second nature ? ”

And when thou hast thus fathomed the cause from which thy principal defect springs, then consider the circumstances amidst which thou livest, and the character of the persons by whom thou art surrounded ; reflect earnestly upon what would be the most effective means of preventing these from calling forth this fault in you, and of rendering it innoxious to them and to thee. To do this, it is not sufficient to make an impulsive resolution. Thou must take a calm and deliberate survey of all the means that may be available for conquering the fault, whether it arise from thy education, thy temperament, or from habit. Probably thou mayst not succeed in getting the better

of it for some days, or even weeks or months. The evil tendency will, no doubt, often assail thee anew ; but thou wilt nevertheless be able to keep it in check and gradually to conquer it, if, each time it stirs within thee, thou wilt recall to mind thy noble resolve, and say to thyself : “ Now is the time to show strength of mind, and to exercise power over my lower nature.” Avoid everything that is likely to tempt thee and to make thee forget thyself ; but when thou canst not do so, then exert thyself to the utmost to master thy feelings, and to act in such manner that thou needst not be ashamed even were the whole world to witness thy conduct. But never place thyself in the way of temptation in order to test thy strength. They who expose themselves to temptation are sure, sooner or later, to succumb. The only means of destroying our evil tendencies and of conquering our weaknesses, is by never rousing them. If they are never called into activity, our faults at last die out of themselves.

Do not attempt too much at once. First conquer the greatest obstacles in thy way to perfection, afterwards the others will be the more easily subdued. Attack thine enemies singly, if thou wouldst be victor. To wage war against all, at one and the same time, might prove too much for thy strength, and might end in robbing thee of all energy and hope.

In like manner, it is easier, in daily life, to keep a strict guard over thyself, when thou hast only one enemy, though it be the strongest, and the greatest, to observe and to combat. This will allow thee to concentrate thy strength, which must, on the contrary, be divided, if thou undertakest ever to keep carefully before thy mind every precept of Christianity, and

anxiously to weigh and to test thy every thought and word. To carry out such an attempt exceeds the measure of human strength.

Be without guile, take men as they are, and let thy intercourse with them be simple and straightforward, without always weighing and calculating results; but never for one moment lose sight of thy chief enemy, thy besetting sin. This must be destroyed, or at least be rendered harmless as regards thyself and others. Together with some prominent faults, thou hast no doubt excellent qualities which endear thee to thy friends. Now, if thou succeedest in divesting thyself of thy worst fault, thou wilt become even more attractive, and wilt be more esteemed by others, while thy self-respect also will increase.

Even in the midst of the turmoil of the world, the difficulty of carrying out a simple resolution like this cannot be very great. The Christian who makes it will find that he has not undertaken an impossibility, for he will see around him thousands of persons who have in this way divested themselves of, and now abhor, the very fault which still disfigures him. And that which is possible for others, why should it not be so for thee?

Many persons who have determined to effect in themselves a sudden and entire change of disposition, and who have aimed at rising at once from a state of great unworthiness into one of the purest holiness, have become the victims of their own exaggerated resolutions, and have not unfrequently fallen into the opposite extreme. Thus many a thoughtless prodigal has become a miser, many a profligate has become a suspicious and unsparing decrrier of every innocent pleasure. But such conversion as this is not improve-

ment, and the resolution to reform cannot in their cases have had its source in Christian wisdom.

First struggle with thy principal weakness, and keep an ever wakeful eye upon it. If thou attemptest more than this in thy intercourse with the world, there is reason to fear that thou wilt succumb in the effort, or that thou mayst, in consequence of the overstraining of thy powers, fall into the opposite error, or perhaps become an eccentric personage, who distinguishes himself by great peculiarities, without therefore being at all a better man than many a true Christian who does his duty modestly and makes no display of his virtues.

It is indeed a great mistake to suppose that the truly wise man or Christian is always serious, and that he avoids all social pleasures. The follower of Jesus can do his duty and approve himself to God in playful as well as in earnest mood, — in the theatre as well as in the temple, — at the banquet, amidst social mirth, as well as when attending to his business avocations, — in a palace, surrounded by every luxury of life, as well as in a hovel, in the midst of poverty and want. No occupation is sinful, no pleasure condemnable, except such as cannot be followed or enjoyed without injury to others, without infringement of their rights, or without damaging our own reputation and stimulating the bad and unworthy tendencies in us.

There are many noble Christians on this earth, full of godliness, but who shrink from displaying this before men by any affectation of peculiar sanctity, by the use of pious phraseology, or the adoption of particular demureness of manner. Indeed, the modesty that belongs to the true Christian always leads him to

conceal his own merits, and to place himself upon a level with others, not to endeavor to distinguish himself from them. By so doing, he wins the affection and confidence of the good, as well as of the less good, and thus opens up new means of usefulness for himself. Like St. Paul, he makes himself everything to all men, in order that he may win many souls. Like Jesus Christ, he associates with publicans and sinners, without ever losing sight of the sublime ends he holds in view.

And thus I learn to recognize the truth, O Saviour of my life, that Thou didst not demand impossibilities of us when Thou spakest, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," and when Thou saidst, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Yea, O Divine Purifier of my heart, I will follow Thee, — follow Thee to God! I will deny myself and conquer myself when I am tempted by the lusts of the flesh! I will *daily* put into execution the rules that I have laid down for the purpose of eradicating my most besetting sin, and thus eventually purge myself of all the weaknesses that cleave to me, however wearisome and painful the task may be.

I have now found the true way of drawing nearer to Thee, O my Divine Teacher, and of becoming like unto Thee. I will strike my enemies one by one; I will conquer the worst and most dangerous of my faults first; the rest will then be the more easy to subdue. Then I shall be washed clean of all my sins and imperfections by thy blood, with which Thou didst attest the divine truth of thy word. Then, O God and Father, most holy of beings, I shall at last be-

come worthy of the great end for which, in thy loving omnipotence, Thou didst call me into being !

Father, my Father, I *will* it, and, supported by thy strength and thy grace, which are mighty in thy children, I shall be able to accomplish what I will to do. I have often failed, for, though my intentions have been good, they have not always been formed with the prudence and wisdom that beseem a Christian, and I have, in consequence, lost courage, and been unfaithful to my resolutions. Endow me, O Father, with strength and insight ! Enlighten me by thy example, O Eternal Son ! Sanctify me in everlasting truth, O Holy Ghost ! Amen.

THE POWER OF PRAYER.

When all my dearest pleasures fail,
When all my brightest stars grow pale,
When blighted fortune prompts despair,
I still find happiness in prayer.

When friends prove false who seemed most true,
When evil tongues do pierce me through,
When in my feelings none can share,
I still find happiness in prayer.

Father! with folded hands to Thee,
Imploringly I bend the knee;
Raised o'er the world, death, every care,
I stand before thy throne in prayer.

(1 THESS. v. 17.)

TO pray, in the fullness of our hearts, to God in his infinite wisdom, is to perform the most solemn and the most sublime act of life. This is not an earthly, but a heavenly occupation. We leave the realm of the transient, and enter the kingdom of the spirit, our true home, and exercise the highest privilege vouchsafed to man, — that of communion with the Most Holy, the Most High.

All mankind pray, — not only the Christian, but also the poor savage on the banks of some unknown stream in a distant land, humbles himself before God. For though his supplication may be addressed to an idol of stone, or to the stars of heaven, his aspirations mount towards the Incomprehensible, towards the Highest Being, who rules the world and rules man and his destinies. The heart of the savage is truly devout, though his mind is steeped in darkness.

A human being, full of heartfelt devotion, prostrated in the dust, with hands, eyes, and soul raised to God, presents a spectacle which even touches the heart of the base profligate, and inspires him with respect. He is forced to confess, "This man is better and greater than I."

All mankind pray. And this inherent tendency in the human soul to return to the source of its being is an attestation of its lofty descent and of its higher future.

The wisest of men pray, for in their hearts the yearning for reunion with God speaks more loudly even than in others. The old man prays, for to him God has revealed Himself more distinctly in the varied events of life. The king prays, for, in spite of all that venal tongues may say, which would not deign to flatter him did he not wear a crown, he feels that he is weak and powerless. In the midst of the borrowed splendor that surrounds the throne, his heart warns him that he is but dust, that he is a sinful creature, and that many of his subjects are more pious, better, more pleasant in the sight of God, than he. The buoyant youth prays, when, withdrawing from the noisy haunts of pleasure, he returns to solitude in the quiet of the night. Behind the sunny landscape that surrounds him, he beholds the storm-pregnant clouds of the future approaching, and he trembles at the insufficiency of his own strength. He holds fast by God; he knows no friend more faithful, no father who is kinder, no protector who is mightier. The rude warrior prays, when at night he lays him down to rest on his blood-stained weapons. He knows that it is not to these that he owes his safety, but to One stronger than they; he knows that

he has to go forth again to his terrible work, and that in a few moments his bleeding corpse may be stretched beside many others on the field of battle. The mother, surrounded by her sweet children, prays. God bestowed upon her these joys of her life, and God may take them away; and the name of the Lord is blessed by her. The profligate, stretched on his bed of suffering, prays with tardy repentance. The hour-glass tells him that this life is not eternity, and in his mirror he catches a glimpse of the ghost of his former self. He now shudders with horror at the remembrance of his life so sinfully wasted, as formerly he smiled with scorn at the practices of true Christians. The sorrowing widow prays beside the coffin of her beloved husband: the world has become a desert to her; she has lost what she cherished most, but God remains to her, and also a blessed hope, which dies not in the grave. The philanthropic sage prays, when, after some benevolent act, he sallies forth to draw new strength from the sight of nature in her beauty, and when, overwhelmed by the splendor of creation, he feels tears of emotion gathering in his eyes.

One only stands aside unmoved, with stony heart, looking with a supercilious smile of pity or of surprise at the world in prayer, and asking: "Why do they pray? If God is omniscient, He knows what they want; if God is all-wise, He knows better than we do what is good for us; if God is all-good, He will not wait for our prayers, but will give us what we need without our asking for it. Why, then, do they pray?"

Thus speaks the self-sufficient skeptic. But even many Christians, who would be sorry to be con-

sidered atheists, or to be failing in Christian faith, endeavor in like manner to justify to themselves their want of earnestness, their frequent neglect of all thoughts that lead to God, their aimless mode of life. They have strength enough to raise doubts in order to vindicate their ways to themselves ; but they have not the courage, the capacity, or the will to see and to admit the worthlessness of these excuses.

Why shouldst thou pray ?

Not for God's sake, for God needs not thy prayers, thy supplications, thy thanks ; and though thou mayst neglect his service, — though thou mayst sink so far below thine own true worth as to enjoy, like the animals, all the good gifts bestowed upon thee without one thought of the Giver, — though thou mayst forget Him, — He will not forget thee. For He is loving and merciful and long-suffering.

Not for God's sake shouldst thou pray, — not in order to tell Him what thou needest, what thou fearest, what thou wishest. Before He called thee into existence, He knew of what things thou wouldst have need ; for He is omniscient. (Matt. vi. 8.)

Not for God's sake, — not in order to teach Him what would be advantageous to thee, not in order to give counsel to Him ; for He alone, before whom all the secrets of the past and of the future lie unveiled, knoweth what is good for us poor mortals under all circumstances and at all times : He is all-wise.

Nor either for the sake of other men shouldst thou pray, — that they may account thee a good Christian, an upright citizen, a worthy father, an exemplary mother. If thou prayest in order to gain the good opinion of other men, without any thought of the importance, the dignity, and the solemnity of prayer,

what art thou other than a blasphemous hypocrite, who tradest fraudulently with the most sacred act of religion, and who would fain make even God an instrument towards the attainment of his unworthy ends? The severe words which Jesus once pronounced in condemnation of the praying Pharisees will then apply to thee.

Nor either shouldst thou pray from mere habit, because thou wert taught so to do when a child, because it has ever been thy custom to say a prayer at stated hours of the day, because thou wishest to keep up the rules of thy parents and forefathers, which thou so grossly misunderstandst. The prayer of mere habit can have no value in the sight of God. Such prayer is no more than the emission of empty, soulless words, which pass from the lips into the air, and there are dissolved into vapor. Rather spare thyself the trouble of such useless prayer, which is not pleasing to God, and which dishonors thyself. Thou dost not venture to address to thy earthly superiors, or even to thy equals, words that have no meaning, to which thou givest no thought; and thou darest to approach in spirit the throne of the Almighty, babbling sentences learnt by rote, without giving any attention to what they contain? "When ye pray," saith Jesus, "use not vain repetitions as the heathen do, who think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." Nay, only the prayer that is poured forth from the innermost depths of a truly devout heart, reaches to heaven.

Why shouldst thou pray? For thine own sake alone, and in order that thou mayst experience in regard to thyself the blessed and heavenly power of prayer.

Even the noblest of men, the most learned, the most enlightened, are but weak mortals, as long as their spirits are clad in the veil of dust. It is impossible for them to remain ever, or even for any length of time, in the exalted mood to which their minds are occasionally attuned by their power of insight, and by sublime principles, free from all dross of earth. They ever sink back again into their lower state ; they again seek support in human customs ; it is a satisfaction to them to feel like children, — and, indeed, what is man, in reference to his Father in heaven, but a child ?

Men need to turn their thoughts to God ; it is a necessity of their nature to commune, and to occupy themselves with the Highest Being ; they cannot be happy without feeling in their hearts confiding trust in the wise and kind providence of an Infinite Father. And in like manner as they are wont to pour out their hearts to parents, friends, or protectors, although these may be well aware of all that they have to say, and would love them and protect and support them, though they spake no word, so also they address themselves to God, with calm, believing, child-like hearts. They lift up their thoughts full of reverence to the Ruler of the universe ; they breathe a gentle sigh towards the Fountain of all good. This is prayer.

The Omniscient knows the thought, knows the aspiration ; for what is hidden to the All-Perfect One, whose Spirit permeates the universe, and stirs the mote dancing in the beam of the remotest star ?

But it is the very thought of his infinite greatness — a thought which is never more present to us than during prayer — that fills us with quickening confi-

dence. Prayer then opens to us, as it were, the portals of the spirit-world, in which we also have some right of citizenship. We draw nearer to the Deity, and feel that we belong to Him. We rise on the wings of prayer, above all that is worthless and perishable, and become greater, yea, more divine, as we do so. The conviction becomes ever mightier within us that we can never cease to exist. We distinguish more clearly between what is everlasting and what is perishable, — between what is real and what is mere appearance. We see the whole universe in a new light. The globe on which we dwell becomes in our eyes a mere speck in the great immeasurable of all things. We descry, through the boundless distances of the starry heavens, a minute portion only of the great temple of the Holy of holies, and we glow with rapture at the thought of having been made worthy, by the power of God, to be called inhabitants of this divine kingdom.

And happy presentiments thrill through us. Heavenly joy pervades all nature. This is the power of prayer; this is the effect of drawing nigh unto God. No one can commune with God without feeling his spirit sanctified and purified by the act.

When a child impresses a grateful kiss on the hand of father or mother, it expresses its noblest sentiments in human fashion. God created me, and assigned to me the lot of man: why should I endeavor to rise above the nature with which He has endowed me, and refuse to venerate Him in pure human fashion, with child-like mind? If, in his grace, He vouchsafe to me in future a higher grade of perfection, oh then I shall, as angel or seraph, as denizen of a higher world, know how to worship Him in nobler

and more worthy manner. But I am a human being, — I am in his eyes but a prattling babe ; therefore, O ye scoffers, let me honor my Creator, my Heavenly Father, as a child does its father, and in the imperfect utterances of humanity. He lends his ear even to these imperfect utterances, He understands the meaning even of the silent tears that escape from my eyes, while they are uplifted to Him. Does not a tender, loving, human mother understand the first smile of her babe ?

When giving myself entirely up to God in prayer, I feel like a child resting on the loving bosom of his father. I dread no fate that can befall me, for I am with Him. I fear no enemies, for He loves me. I go through the world with fuller confidence. Such is the power of prayer.

And when I thus, with fervent piety, endeavor to draw nigh to the Holy of holies, whom none dare approach who are not pure and sinless, every fault that I have committed, my precipitate actions, my passions, force themselves in between me and God. Alas ! I would fain hold communion with Him, and I am not worthy to look up to Him. Sinner as I am, I lie sorrowful at the feet of the Almighty, suing for mercy. Solemn, fervent promises of a better life in future are offered up by me. They inspire me with new strength, new courage, renewed cheerfulness. The all-good God bears no resentment. How could a human passion, such as that which we call resentment, dwell in the mind of the All-perfect ? Nay, my punishment comes from my own sins ; it is I who feel resentment against myself ; it is I who deplore that I have been growing in sinfulness, that I have been departing farther from God. I strive to regain

what I have lost. My Saviour has taught me that the All-merciful will not reject the repentant sinner. And God hears my promises, and the Omniscient is witness that I earnestly strive to fulfill them by conquering my faults. Full of love towards Him, I am full of love towards my fellow-men. The prayer has purified and sanctified me. Through it, I have become a better, a more virtuous being than I was before. Such is the power of prayer.

He who lives at enmity with the members of his household, with relatives or acquaintances, — he who takes malicious pleasure in disclosing the faults of his fellow-men, and who enviously depreciates their merits, — he who deals in lies instead of truth, in dishonesty instead of honesty, in persecution instead of kindness, in deception instead of noble uprightness, — he cannot pray ! To pray is to be with God ; and he who is with God cannot persevere in sin.

Thou prayest, O Christian, and pourest forth supplications. Yet what thou askest is not always granted. But sooner or later thou wilt learn to see how injurious it would have been for thee had thy wishes been fulfilled. God is kinder to us than we are to ourselves, because He is wiser.

But should we therefore cease to lay our supplications before the Lord ? Ought we to renounce and desist from our child-like submission of our wishes to our Heavenly Father ? Nay, let not such thoughts disturb the holy relations between thee and God. "Ask, and it shall be given to thee ; knock, and the door shall be opened unto thee."

Thou believest in a Divine Providence, which from eternity hath ordered thy destiny. Has not, then, He whose providence thus rules been cognizant of all

that thou wouldst do, and of all that thou wouldst leave undone? has He not known from all eternity what would be thy wants, thy prayers, and the moods of thy mind? Yea, He did hear thy prayers before thou wert born. Yet thou prayest, and he who prays wisely knows the blessing of prayer.

Recall to mind the hours in which thou hast stood before God with trembling heart, crying, Save me, O merciful Father! Recall to mind the times when all thy prospects have been obscured, and when, on the brink of despair, thou hast turned in faith to the only God, crying, The darkness will not be dispelled except Thou sheddest light upon my future! And lo! circumstances to which thou didst never look forward, events apparently the most insignificant, things which men call accidental, have saved thee, and improved thy condition. Thou hast regained thy happiness and thy cheerfulness. But in the order of the Divine creation there is no such thing as chance or accident. There is a God of infinite power and mercy. Thou hast felt his presence. Such is the power of prayer.

I have felt thy presence, O God and Father, when my soul has been most cast down. I have felt thy presence when the whole world around me has seemed dead as the barren desert. I have felt thy presence when no other friend was left to me. I have felt thy presence when I have been tottering on the threshold of death. Thou wert ever there, Thou didst ever remain. Thou didst succor me, Thou didst overwhelm me with thy mercies, and didst change with almighty hand the circumstances that surrounded me, and which seemed as if they could never be changed.

Therefore, as long as I breathe, I will hold fast by

Thee ; I will cry to Thee, “ Father, Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.” Therefore will I ever cling to thee with childlike trust. Thou listenest to my stammering voice, Thou understandest the meaning of my tears, Thou knowest the secret of my sighs.

In Thee, through Thee, with Thee alone, can I be happy. Without Thee, my existence would be naught, and it would be better for me had I never been born. Wherever Thou art, there is heaven, there is bliss. I can never be unhappy save when I stray from Thee. Amen.

LOVE AND FEAR OF GOD.

I love Thee, Lord! Thou art my choice,
In Thee my soul shall still rejoice,
My heritage, my part!
Thee will I more than all things love,
Obey Thee, joy all joys above!
Nor e'er let sin my sorrow prove;
Thou, Lord, my Saviour art!

My silent hours how deeply blest!
In Thee my soul has found its rest,
And heavenly pleasure known.
O bliss! to raise our souls to Thee,
Thy life to live, thy face to see,
Who, guiding us so tenderly,
A Father's love hast shown.

(1 JOHN iv. 16-21.)

HOWEVER important may be the relations in which a human being stands here on earth to the various companions of his life; however much these relations may lay hold upon his feelings and occupy his mind, — be it as superior or inferior, — as son, daughter, or head of a family, — as enterprising youth, to whom the world seems still full of hope and promise, or as a hoary-headed man, surrounded by all the reverence his virtues merit, — there is one relation in which every mortal stands, which is more important, more attractive, more unalterable, and more indestructible than any of these, and that is his relation to the Deity.

Parents and relatives may die, but God ever remains with him. Friends change their minds, forget their most touching promises, prefer other hearts to

ours, — God ever remains faithful to us. The freshness and attraction of youthful beauty and grace are lost in a few years ; men's admiring smiles become fewer, — but God remains ever the same. War, fire, or rebellion may destroy my property ; my inferiors may cease to obey me ; old adherents may leave me to attach themselves to another ; I am deserted ; all my relations to my fellow-men are changed, — but my relation to God can undergo no shadow of change.

Yet how different is the relation in which each one of the countless number of human beings who look up to God places himself to the Deity ! Perhaps there are no two mortals whose relation to their Heavenly Ruler is exactly the same.

The conception we form of the Deity varies according to our position in life, to our experience and our knowledge. And our conception of Him regulates the relation in which we place ourselves to Him. There are, for instance, barbarous nations, whose ideas of a Godhead are so imperfect that they imagine themselves to be, not indeed more mighty, but in many respects cleverer, than the Divinity, and who, in consequence, blame their gods for certain acts, and even scold them and laugh at them. These poor ignorants are as much to be pitied as many Christians, who are equally discontented, and who grumble when God refuses to hear their prayers and to fulfill their foolish wishes. There are other people, again, whose notions of the Highest Being are so contemptible that they do not fear to pray to Him for assistance in their most infamous undertakings, in murder and robbery, in deception and seduction, or for the attainment of the most frivolous objects, or for the satisfaction of their revengeful feelings. And — alas that I should

have to say so! — it is not only among the heathens that this desecration of the Majesty of the Almighty is met with! Even Christians, even the so-called enlightened nations of Europe, at times express the hope that God will lend them his assistance to satisfy their ambition or their malice, or will become the instrument of human revenge! Indeed, nations frequently, by command of their rulers, pray to God, the one for the destruction of the other!

Is this a worthy relation for man to place himself in to God? Is it the right relation? How contemptible are your experiences, how pitiable your conceptions! If the beasts of prey in the wilderness could form an idea of the Deity, it would be such as yours, and their prayers, also, would be such as yours. Strength, booty, subjection, victory, such would be their burden!

The conceptions of the Highest Being formed by men are also in a great measure dependent on the differences in their temperaments.

Men who are by nature prone to gentle, compassionate, and cheerful sentiments, think of God as the all-merciful, loving, long-suffering Father, who never can or will punish with inexorable severity. On the other hand, minds of a dark and passionate character, easily roused to anger, form a conception of the Deity as a strong and jealous God, as an angry, threatening, relentless judge, who punishes the sins of the fathers on the children in the third and fourth generation. Minds inclined to melancholy recognize in the Creator of spirits an earnest educator, who tries them in all kinds of suffering before He admits them to be participators in his bliss; who allows them to found no hope on their own worth or

merits, but sends them salvation exclusively through the blood of the Lamb, who was sacrificed for the sins of the world. The proud and the arrogant conceive of God as the most exalted Being, as the king of the world, who cannot be approached except through the intercession of Jesus, — or other persons held by mortals to be saintly, — or conceive of Him as being so far exalted above all creation that He takes no heed of the fate, the hopes, the sufferings, or prayers of individual men.

So diverse are the conceptions which men form of the Deity. Therefore one man, when he prays, looks upon himself as standing in the same relation to God as that in which a thoughtless and ignorant child stands to his father; another trembles before the All-just and All-mighty, like a timid slave. Another, overwhelmed by constant self-contempt and utter hopelessness, strives only to secure to himself the mercy of Jesus and the imputation of his merits, imagining that whatever good man may possess in himself is all vain, and is held as naught by God; another strives to fulfill with anxious zeal every minute ordinance which he believes to emanate from the Deity, as though man depended on his own merits exclusively and had nothing to hope from the mercy of the Heavenly Father; a third is more indifferent, because he believes it to be incompatible with the infinite majesty of God, and therefore improbable, that the Deity should take account of every individual, and of each of his actions, feelings, and thoughts, but that whoever has been elected for salvation will be saved; that all things are subject to the great law of eternal necessity.

What is then the real, true relation in which I

stand to my Creator, or in which I ought to stand to Him? This I cannot learn from the lips of any mortal, but it is taught with certainty by Divine revelation in the Holy Scriptures. It is taught to me by Jesus and his disciples.

And they teach me to look up to the Highest Spirit, the Creator of the universe, with childlike faith and trust. "Have faith in God," cries Jesus. (Mark xi. 22.) He taught us to call God our Father. (Matt. vi. 8, 9.) He promises us, in the name of God, the Rewarder of all, that our trespasses will be forgiven, if we forgive those who have trespassed against us. (Mark xi. 25.) He saith: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment! And the second is like, namely, this: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." (Mark xii. 30, 31.) This is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. (Mark xii. 33.) And he who believes this and can do this, — only he, so saith Christ himself, is not far from the kingdom of God. (Mark xii. 34.)

Thus we are taught by Jesus the Messiah. Therefore all else which is taught and preached, and which differs from these divine words, from the sense of this divine revelation, is but human dogmatizing and error, empty casuistry, or senseless fanaticism. Even though in the numerous cases wherein particular passages in the Old Testament seem to contradict the words of Jesus, we have to attend to the sayings of the divine Son, not to the sayings of the pious men and prophets who lived hundreds of years before the appearance of Jesus, and who could not rejoice in the light which

we have attained through Him. Does not the exalted Enlightener of the world himself say, "I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill," to perfect, and to reveal the will of God in its fullness? And he did so. And in what a sublime spirit! How much more perfectly than all the prophets of the Old Testament! See how He teaches it in the Gospel of St. Matthew, v. 20-48, in words which every follower of the Saviour ought to imprint on his or her heart and memory.

This also is the spirit in which the Apostles of the Lord, and more especially John, the favorite of Jesus, taught. "God is love," says St. John (1 Ep. iv. 16-18), "and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear has torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us."

The Holy Scriptures do indeed also exhort us to be God-fearing, but this does not mean that we should be afraid of God, or that we should tremble at his wrath (only the sinner has to fear this, not the true Christian who lives and acts with and in God), but that we should hold sacred all things which bear upon our religion, that is to say the doctrines, opinions, and customs connected with our worship of God. The fear of God is the pious, holy dread of desecrating aught that has been consecrated to God and to his worship. But those who truly love God cannot be devoid of reverence for Him and for all things that are consecrated to Him. Can a child love his father tenderly, and yet not feel respect and affection for all that in any way belongs to his father, or for that

which the love of others has dedicated to his father, or for all that emanates from him?

In this sense fear of God may be combined with the most ardent love of God, without the latter being in any way mixed up with terror, anguish, or apprehension. Fear of God is the fruit of deep-felt love of God.

Very few persons stand in this relation of guileless, trusting, child-like love to our Father in heaven. In vain do Jesus and his holy messengers exhort us to this love. Nevertheless, fear predominates in most hearts. Most men pray to the Father not so much from love, or from an impulse of the heart to disburden itself of its infinite debt of gratitude towards the Giver of all good, but because they dread his judgments, because they tremble at the thought of the day of retribution, or because they feel themselves in danger of destruction and know no other help or refuge than the Almighty.

How, then, am I to reëstablish my relation to God, so that it may be in harmony with what Jesus teaches? How can I attain to true, pure, simple, child-like, trusting love to God?

To love God, we must know Him. For how canst thou love even a human being of whom thou knowest little or nothing? Thy reverence, thy love, thy heart-felt worship of Him, who is alone worthy of worship, will increase in exact proportion to thy extended knowledge of his greatness, his holiness, and his mercy.

However, thou canst not learn to know Him by merely learning to repeat by rote Biblical phrases or other words that speak generally of the Divine attributes. Thou must go forth thyself, and seek Him

out in his creation, which bears witness to his marvelous wisdom ; in his guidance of the world and of the destinies of the nations that inhabit it ; in the loving care of all which He is constantly manifesting, yea, even daily in the events of thine own life.

And if thou findest that thy mind and heart, oppressed by the burdens of the day, are not always capable of devoting themselves to this sublime occupation, then seek recreation and instruction in reading the books of wise and experienced men on the works of God in nature. By the instruction which thou wilt derive from these the eyes of thy spirit will be opened, and thou wilt discern more clearly. Or visit the temple of the Lord with true devotion and a sincere desire for edification, and listen to the exposition and application of divine truths, which thou hast an opportunity of hearing there every Sunday. Neglect no occasion that may present itself of enlightening thy understanding, and thereby increasing thy knowledge of God. The more clearly thou discernest the Father of all, the more sublime and majestic will He appear to thee, the more inscrutable in his wisdom, the more holy in his guidance of man, the more inexhaustible in his mercy and grace. Man, shouldst thou never before have been able to pray to God from the depths of thy heart, except in the midst of sorrow and tribulation, thou wilt, when thou knowest God, learn to pray from love, and with sweet tears of joy ; and the more thy love develops itself, the deeper will be thy knowledge of God.

Yes, we must love God in order to know Him, in as far as poor mortals, born in the dust of this earth, can learn to know the infinite and most exalted Being whose greatness and perfection far surpass our

powers of comprehension. Even men can only be truly known to us when we love them, and we never learn thoroughly to understand those who are indifferent to us. For when we love we give redoubled attention to all that the beloved object says and does; we take far more pains to penetrate into his thoughts, and to understand his views, and we endeavor to draw conclusions as to his meaning and his wishes, from trifling observations and matters which we should hardly notice in others. The same is the case with the soul, in regard to its heavenly Maker.

This true relation of man to God, that is to say, the soul's love of God, cannot indeed be manifested in the same way as man's love and friendship for man. And when attempts are erroneously made thus to express it, the result is either a barren play with earthly feelings, or mere dead and outward practices.

The true love of the soul for God does not express itself in sentimental enthusiasm, in newly invented sweet and flattering names applied to God, in constant yearning for Him, and in a perpetual dwelling of the spirit on the glory of the Holy of holies. Such a state of mind is not natural to man, and cannot, therefore, be long sustained. Persons who, by some strange perversion of mind, are led to believe that love of God manifests itself in this way, generally end by falling into a state of dejection, in which they torment themselves with reproaches for not always having their thoughts riveted on God, but having, on the contrary, given some of their attention to the things of this world also. They torment themselves without reason, because they are attempting to make the impossible possible. At last, discontent with themselves drives them either into apathy or frivolity, or into self-destructive and barren fanaticism.

True love and fear of God do not either manifest themselves in fervent and frequent prayers, in anxious observation of all Church rules, by an outward look of demureness, by an assumption of sanctity that degenerates into bigotry, and holds light all the joys of life, or by a puritanical contempt of the world, which but too often borders on hypocrisy. Verily, the love which God expects from us is not to be evinced in a constant repetition of the exclamation, "Lord, Lord!" or "Abba! dear Father!" The love which the Creator demands of his children is not that we should disdain the pleasures of life which He bestows upon us with such bountiful hand, but that we should do the will of our Father who is in heaven.

The will of the Eternal Father is, that we should have confidence in Him, confidence in his providence, in his clemency and fatherly kindness, — confidence that even our bitterest sufferings come from Him, and are for the good of our souls.

Not with the earthly feelings with which we love our fellow-men can we love the infinite God in his greatness, but only with deep reverence and trusting submission to his will.

The love of our soul for God is, however, most clearly revealed in endeavors to become like unto Him, and to assimilate itself to his love for us, that is to say, in endeavors to look upon all men as our brothers, to love them as such, and to contribute to their contentment, their well-being, and their peace, as much as in us lies.

For "if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we

from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.”

Here, then, we have the secret revealed to us as to wherein consists the true love of man to God, and as to how it is to manifest itself. This is the relation in which my soul, while here on earth, is to stand to its Maker. Ah, how often have I not misunderstood this love, — how often forgotten it! Woe is me, for the love of God has not always dwelt in me, and I have been afraid of God; but so long as I dwelt in fear, I dwelt not in God.

How often have I not deluded myself when I have looked upon myself as a child of God, and yet harbored in my heart envy towards those who were considered better than I; when I repelled with proud unforgiveness a fellow-man, who had perhaps wounded my feelings by some act which was, after all, but the consequence of my own conduct! How often has my heart ventured to pray to God, while filled with hatred to his creatures! Can we believe that a child who does not long to be like his excellent father, really sincerely loves that father?

Forgive, oh forgive me, Father in heaven! I will turn to Thee again with new and true love. I will re-establish the blessed relation of my soul to Thee, which Jesus Christ has taught me is the right one. Yes, O Heavenly Father, I will love Thee, not in words, but in deeds; for not in words, but in works, hath THY love for us all been most gloriously manifested.

O my fellow-men, relatives, fellow-citizens, friends, acquaintances, all who meet me on my pilgrimage through life, I will love God the Father in you his children; I will love the Creator in his creatures. I will cease to hate you. Calm peace takes possession

of my heart. And should you misjudge me and hate me (alas! your doing so is but a natural consequence and punishment of my many faults and errors), should you even persecute me, be it so. But I will acknowledge no foe upon earth; I will not hate you. I will seek to protect myself against your anger, for God bids me do this. But while thus protecting myself, I will sue anew for your friendship and esteem. You will not deny it to me when you learn to know how full of love to each of you is my heart, and how willingly I would assist all with deed and counsel, as far as my limited means will allow.

O my God and Father, keep me in love of Thee! Let me never waver therein! Let me dwell in Thee now and forever! Amen!

RELIGIOUS DEVOTION.

When in some solemn, silent hour,
I stand before my Maker's face,
And, urged by deep devotion's power,
In prayer I seek the throne of grace,
What joy, what heavenly peace I feel,
Sent from thy presence, o'er me steal.

How trifling seems each transient pleasure
Of earth, with all its pomp and show,
Which men still covet as their treasure,
And to their idol, slave-like, bow.
What bliss so pure, what joy so fair,
As to be one with God in prayer?

Then on devotion's wing I'll soar,
Till unto thee, my God, I rise;
Creation's wondrous work explore,
And understand thy mysteries, —
To praise and worship Thee aright
Uplifts man to the angels' height.

(MATT. xv. 8.)

THE Pharisees and Interpreters of the Mosaic Law in Jerusalem gathered one day around the Messiah, and importuned Him with questions meant to be embarrassing to Him and to his disciples. For the latter, as well as their Divine Guide, at times neglected many little observances which the laws of Moses enjoin on various occasions, as for instance the washing of hands before touching bread that was to be eaten.

Christ addressed them with the convincing power which his words ever possessed. He made it clear to them that they did indeed observe with admirable

strictness even the smallest outward act of the law, that they performed every sacrifice and every purification, and pronounced every prayer, yet that they were without religion, and far from the spirit of the Mosaic doctrine. He convinced them of this by unanswerable examples, and He added, that they were without religion, because they were without devotion. "Ye hypocrites!" He cried, "well did Esaias prophesy of you saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." (Matt. xv. 7, 8.)

Religion is the sacred relation in which man stands to God. But a mere recognition of this relation does not constitute religion, nor either does the mere observance of certain outward signs of reverence for the Highest Being constitute religion; but God, being a spirit, the reverence for the All-holy must penetrate the spirit of man, and in his meditations, in his prayers, and when he is performing acts of piety, he must rise above all that is earthly to the Spirit of spirits. This uplifting of the spirit to God, this merging, as it were, of the spirit in God, is devotion. Without this devotion it is impossible to be truly religious, and all religion, all belief, all knowledge, all worship, all prayer, all good acts are in vain, and merely a dead show.

Jesus knew the human heart in its depths and in its weaknesses. Therefore the words which He spake nearly two thousand years ago are strikingly true even at this time; and what He preached in the land of Genesareth is as fully recognized as truth, as if what He said had been addressed to us here in our country on this very day. Observe the greater number of Christians of the present time! Listen to

the interpreters of the Bible in the pulpits, how accurately they know the words of the Scriptures, how cleverly they expound the whole series of human duties, or the secrets of faith. But observe their inward life, and their outward activity. They consider that all is done when they have gone through the service and preached their sermon, as though what they are and what they do were only a matter of official duty. They have the knowledge, but not the spirit, of religion. Listen to the people, how regularly they say grace before meals, how regularly they pray, morning and evening, in their homes and in church, beside the graves of the dead, as at all established times of edification. Observe how regularly they repair to the temple of God, and take their seats therein; but even there attending to precedence of rank, not entering like children the house of their father with a feeling of the equality of all, but forgetting that before God there is no distinction of persons! Observe how zealously they throng to communion, to mass, to baptism, to the sermon; how they cast down their eyes and fold their hands; how strictly they observe the fasts at home, or read a chapter in the Bible! But if you could penetrate into their innermost hearts, into their lives at home and in their various vocations, into the manœuvres of their selfishness or their vanity, what would you behold! They have fulfilled all the outward observances of the law, of human ordinances and institutions, but the divine commandments they have not fulfilled. They have the husk, but the kernel is dead; they have the letter, but not the spirit. Whatever they be, and whatever they do, they have no devotion. Therefore, though they be religious they are not godly. It is this people

of which the Messiah spake, "They draw nigh unto me with their mouths, and they honor me with their lips; but their heart is far from me!"

It is true, many Christians have felt this, and have longed for a better state of things, and have therefore separated themselves from the great mass, and formed new congregations, and new sects within the Christian Church. But they have in the greater number of cases only fallen into opposite faults. Their virtues, their works of true godliness they did not increase, but only their hours of prayer; the number of their devotional exercises was augmented, but not their devotion. Christ and his disciples did not separate themselves from the other worshipers of God, whether they were better or worse, but prayed with the rest of the Jews in the temple and in the synagogue. It matters little in whose company we pray, or with what outward demonstrations; it is the spirit in which we pray that is important. Many prayers, with all the outward appearances of devotion; having the name of God ever on the lips; abstaining from all innocent pleasures out of reverence for the Omnipresent; the observance of outward strictness and demureness, while the heart is full of envy, or anger, or is moved by other evil passions, — this is not devotion, but sanctimoniousness. Not the weapons and the war-song, but courage, makes the true warrior. "Not all they who say, Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." So spake Jesus.

Still less in the spirit of Jesus Christ is the system of penances, which drives men away from their fellow-men, in order that they may devote themselves entirely to God; which makes them dwell in deserts and solitary cells; which leads them to neglect those

duties to human society which the Son of God so earnestly enjoined ; which induces them to destroy by fearful castigations their bodies, which the Divine Word teaches them they ought to look upon as a sanctuary and temple of God ; to enfeeble by fastings, by physical suffering, and by privations of all kinds, those mental and bodily powers, which the Heavenly Father bestowed upon them as the talent which they are to turn to the best account for the benefit of mankind, — as the light which they are not to put under a bushel. This is not religiosity or godliness, but the destruction thereof, for it is in opposition to the will of God. It is not devotion, but fanaticism, not a living in the Lord, but self-destruction arising out of a most unhallowed misunderstanding of the words of Christ. They seized the letter of the word, and held fast by that, and thus lost the spirit. And the letter killeth, the spirit alone quickeneth.

What then is devotion ? The very term explains itself. It is a devoting of ourselves to that which we are doing ; a fixing of the entire attention of the mind on the occupation we are engaged in. In this general sense of the term, everything which we do with the whole power of our mind is performed with devotion.

The more important a thing is to us, the more strongly it rivets our attention. Now what can be more important to us than our true happiness, the position we hold in the universe, our relation to eternity ? What is there in the universe, and in all eternity, more exalted than God ? Therefore religiosity is impossible without devotion. Therefore devotion is the freeing of the spirit from all distracting circumstances, from all earthly trammels, and the up-

lifting of it to Divine things! As soon as these latter really become our object, they spontaneously sway our whole inward being. Therefore devotion is that solemn mood of the mind in which all worldly thoughts are forgotten. The highest degree of devotion is that silent rapture of the heart, which shone in the face of Jesus when at prayer, or in the face of Stephen, when, filled with the Holy Ghost, he looked up to heaven and beheld the Lord in his glory, while the people were stoning him. (Acts vii. 55-59.)

This devotion, as the experience of every man will tell him, cannot be produced by artificial means. You may appoint hours of prayer; you may let the beads of the rosary pass through your fingers; you may fold your hands and uplift your eyes, or fall upon your knees or upon your faces; you may veil your face in prayer, or uncover your heads, — but these postures will produce no devotion, though they may be a means of reminding you that you ought to feel devout, and may be an outward sign of the inward devotion, and as such fitted to keep off distracting thoughts. Devotion must work from within outward, from without you cannot force it into inward existence.

Such outward observances as those just alluded to, though they cannot generate true devotion or take the place of it, are not, however, in themselves reprehensible, but, on the contrary, are much to be commended. They remind all present, particularly in large assemblies, that the people have come together to worship God; they prevent by their uniformity, all such little matters as are more likely to distract the attention where many persons are gathered together than when we are in solitude. Indeed, as ac-

according to our nature, everything that impresses our outward senses produces a great effect on our inward moods, it is not improbable that these outward observances, though they cannot awaken devotion, may nevertheless prepare the heart and make it receptive for it.

If it be undeniable that true devotion cannot be artificially produced from without, it is still more certain that it cannot be forced or awakened by command. Therefore to say to any one, "Be devout," when his heart is either incapable of, or disinclined to, this sublime mood, is foolish and vain. The complaint of many preachers as to the want of devotion in their hearers is most frequently the self-condemnation of the complaining teacher. For the complaint proves that they are themselves failing either in zeal and diligence, or in the power, so essential in their vocation, of rousing and riveting the attention of the congregation by the vivacity, lucidity, dignity, and general attractiveness of their sermons, and of lifting up the minds of their hearers to the level of their subject.

Devotion is a free utterance and action of the heart, as are love and esteem. It can as little be called forth on command as love. You may command your children to be quiet, to fold their hands and look down, and to repeat prayers learnt by rote; but what they feel, what occupies their thoughts at that moment, you cannot know, and you have no control over it. To awaken true devotion a very different kind of preparation is required.

For this reason, the blind, though well-meant zeal of certain rulers who used to force their subjects to go to church, to take the sacrament regularly, to go

to confession, and to fulfill other religious observances, under penalty of punishment, was certainly a great mistake. Such ordinances do not promote religion or godliness, but, on the contrary, hypocrisy, which is an abomination in the sight of the Lord. Forced service can never be a service of love. It is not empty words or outward appearances of devotion that the Lord demands. The people who are content with these are the people of whom He saith, "It draweth nigh to me with its mouth, and honoreth me with its lips, but its heart is far from me."

No ; devotion can neither be forced nor artificially fostered ; it must arise spontaneously in the heart ; and it does arise spontaneously when the heart is full of natural reverence and deep love for the Most High. In like manner, an inferior listens with reverential attention to a superior whom he truly respects ; in like manner, the subject looks up with deference to his prince, who, he knows, has the power to elevate him or to prostrate him in the dust ; in like manner, a child speaks with tenderness to its mother, because it clings to her with love and gratitude. Learn, then, to know the majesty of the Almighty God in his works ; learn to trace his wisdom, his providence, his mercy, in the events of thine own life ; realize to thyself his infinite power and his infinite love ; picture Him to thyself as the Exalted One, in comparison with whom all the suns of the heavens are but as atoms of dust, and the mightiest of the earth, clad in purple and gold, are but as poor creeping worms, — as the Ruler of thy destiny, the Lord of life and of death, the Judge of the dead, the Eternal God, — and a feeling of reverential awe will thrill through thee, and the world of sense, with all

its mere appearances, will vanish like a shadow. Thy spirit, awe-struck, yet full of courage, will lift itself up to the Creator, and anxiously, yet full of hope and love, thy soul will yearn towards the Father of souls, and thou wilt feel true devotion.

Many persons, having never felt true devotion, hardly know what it is, — others have known it only in some great crisis of their life, when fear and anguish have oppressed their hearts, and they could find no help, no refuge except in the Almighty! Others, again, on their death-bed pray for the first time with true devotion, when offering up the prayer which proves to be their last; others, when the thunders of the Lord of storms roll above the earth, and the forked lightning rends the heavens in twain; others, when they stand with bleeding hearts by the bedside of a dying father or mother, husband or wife, a beloved child or valued friend, and seek in vain to stay the fleeting life. On such occasions even the most frivolous minds realize to themselves the greatness, the power, and the love of the Infinite God, and the nothingness of human things; and this is devotion.

O parents, educators, public teachers, and expounders of the Gospel, teach the youth of the land, and teach also the men and women, to acknowledge the exalted attributes of the Most High, the perfection, power, and mercifulness of the All-Perfect One, and they will not lack reverence, and feelings of true devotion will arise spontaneously in their souls. Do not teach children first to repeat by rote prayers, which in most cases they cannot understand, and then afterwards speak to them of the attributes of the Heavenly Father; but first inspire both the young and the aged

with reverence for the God of infinite glory and love, for the God of infinite goodness, and they will then begin to pray of themselves, without having learnt prayers by heart. And ye, O rulers and magistrates, improve the schools for the poor; improve public worship, by taking care that the clergy, the religious teachers of the people, be men of dignified character, of spotless conduct, of well-stored minds, and full of zeal: and religiosity will then bloom forth spontaneously among the people. Then there will be no want of true devotion either in the public or the private prayers of the people, nor when they contemplate nature, nor in the emotions called forth by the spectacle of human events. For affectionate and reverential uplifting of our souls to God does not only take place in those communions with Him which we term prayer, but whenever an event in our lives or the performance of a duty points to God. Thus, I may feel devotion while studying the marvels of creation, or hearing them described. So likewise the contemplation of my duties, and the examination of my own virtues and defects, and every new extension of my knowledge, may fill me with feelings of devotion. Thus the emotion with which I witness the sufferings or the happiness of good men, the punishment which vice inflicts on itself, and the sweet rewards which virtue prepares for itself, may be akin to devotion. In like manner the perusal of pious works or the hearing of some religious discourse may raise the mind up into that higher mood. I may also feel truly devout while giving alms, or when performing my daily duties, be it in my household or in my office. Jesus has taught me to love God devoutly, that is to say with all my heart, and all my soul, and all

my strength. For devotion excludes everything that is alien to its principal object.

But for this very reason men cannot cultivate devotion, as it is called, at all hours of the day ; for the common avocations of public and domestic life have also a claim upon our attention. There are many things which we have to do for the preservation of our health, for the promotion of our domestic happiness, as also for the improvement of our business and of our minds, which cannot be attended to when our thoughts are distracted. It would be foolish to demand that the soul should at those moments be in a state of exaltation, and it is hypocritical to assume, while attending to such matters, a canting tone, and a sanctified and solemn demureness of manner. Everything must have its time ; and to do each thing in its right time, and the right at all times, is the fundamental principle of Christianity. Rejoice with the happy, weep with the sorrowful ! He who attempts to be all things at all times, is sure of doing all things by half only.

But if thou desirest to occupy thyself at some fixed hour of the day with sacred matters, then let it be with that earnestness which is due to the most important of our concerns on earth, and the wonderful effect of this devotion on thy heart, the influence of that one solemn hour, or be it only minute, will not fail to make itself felt through all the other hours of worldly bustle. Just as in spring a gentle morning shower, or as in summer the morning dew, refreshes nature for the whole of the rest of the day, so an hour of devotion strengthens the heart of man for a long series of events, resolutions, and actions. Be what follows either joyful, or sorrowful, or terrible, — the

mind will ever maintain a lofty superiority over it. Nay, this elevated mood produced, will even make itself felt in the insignificant conversation with friends, and in the midst of sport and merriment. Devout occupation of the mind with divine things is an uplifting of it to the Most High. All earthly matters are then excluded, all low passions are silent. He who holds frequent communion with God becomes thereby a more exalted and divine man. The sight of all that is defective and unjust will cause him uneasiness. The lofty mood will in a measure become habitual and prevalent in him. It will diffuse a holiness through his mind which will ennoble all his thoughts, feelings, and utterances. Whatever he observes, says, or desires will be tinged with charity, gentleness, and kindness, will bear the impress of a noble spirit. For who can present himself before God in prayer or holy meditation, and then descend as it were from the foot of the throne of the Almighty, and give himself up to unworthy feelings or actions?

To the Christian, therefore, the whole of life in a certain measure becomes one great act of devotion. Such was thy life, O Jesus Christ, Divine Man, Saviour of the world. Thy entire activity among the children of this earth was a holy uplifting of the purest of souls? Thy thought of the Father of spirits was a constant holy rapture; for who has known the Father as Thou didst? Thy prayers were a true merging of thy spirit in God's.

O my God, Lord of the universe, Invisible and Majestic Being, who compriseth in thyself all things, and who art still my Father, — to draw nearer to Thee, to learn to know Thee ever better through the teachings of Jesus, and through the glorious marvels

of thy wondrous creation, and to grow ever holier through means of my extended knowledge,—to grow more divine by unity of spirit with Thee, O my God,—such is the yearning and striving of my soul, such is the object of my life,—and to this I must ever remain faithful. How could I be otherwise? The spectacle of thy greatness fills the heavens and the earth with wonder and reverence, the contemplation of thy love fills the infinite worlds with rapture. Seraphim and cherubim kneel praying before Thee, and in devout prayer mortals come nearer to the angels and their acts. Oh, that I could belong to those holy hosts, that I could glorify Thee worthily here on earth already. But may I not do so? Yea, Thou hast given me the grace and the power so to do, though hereafter, when I am nearer to Thee, when I myself have grown worthier, I shall do it more worthily still. Amen!

CHRISTIAN FAITH.

Strengthen, for it oft will falter,
My belief, O God! in Thee;
Joyfully before thine altar,
Then shall rise my thanks to Thee.
Let me not of Thee despair,
Wearying thy throne with prayer;
Sinks my faith, O Fount of light!
Make it glow more clear and bright.

Should bewildering doubts awaken,
Error tempt with dazzling glow:
Thy disciple, true, unshaken,
I will strive myself to show.
Let thy ray again beam on me,
Shower down thy faith upon me;
In unclouded light divine,
Make the truth's pure splendor shine.

To thy word, and not the learning
Of man's wisdom let me seek,
There thy goodness, Lord, discerning,
Let thy voice within me speak.
More than all beneath the skies
Let me still thy witness prize;
All my future life be shown,
Guided by thy truth alone.

(JOHN xii. 44-46.)

WERE I a stranger, coming from some distant, solitary island in the ocean, whither the name or the doctrines of Jesus had never penetrated, and were I suddenly to be introduced among the nations of the world, and to witness their different modes of worshipping the Deity, and to become acquainted with their various religious beliefs; and I felt within

me the same deep yearning after the true faith, which as a child I used to feel after the Unknown, when I gazed at the wonders of nature, such as the starry heavens, or the majestic thunder-clouds which passed over the shuddering earth; which faith should I embrace as the only true one? Should I bow down with the heathen before their idols, or kneel with the Christians in their temples? Should I honor with the Jews the strong and jealous Jehovah and the laws of Moses, with all their rules of outward discipline, or should I with the followers of Mahomet hate and persecute with the sword, all nations who do not accept the tenets of their prophet?

Whereby should I recognize the truth and divinity of the right faith? For though the Christians boast of having a Divine revelation, the Jews also believe that Moses received their laws on Mount Sinai, direct from the hand of God; and Mahomet likewise, when preaching in the deserts of Arabia, announced his doctrine as coming from God; whilst the heathens maintained that Divine beings had come down on earth to man, in order to instruct him in heavenly things.

Whereby, then, shall I recognize the correctness of these assertions, as each one thinks that he alone has the true religion, and none will fall away from his belief; as heathens and Turks defend their faith with the sword; as the Jews have preferred to endure every suffering heaped upon them by other nations, rather than give up the laws of Moses, and thousands of Christians have died as martyrs to the strength of their convictions?

I should say, that THAT FAITH ONLY CAN BE TRULY DIVINE WHICH MAKES MEN MORE GOD-LIKE,

WHICH ELEVATES THEM ABOVE THE THINGS OF THE EARTH, ABOVE THEIR OWN FATE, AND ABOVE THE TERRORS OF DEATH, and which proves thereby that man's free and independent spirit is of nobler nature than the soul of the animal, which knows no higher object than the satisfaction of physical wants. For a faith that comes from God must have the power of making us like unto God, of raising us up from a lower to a higher state; for God is infinitely exalted above man.

Measured by such a standard, the religions of heathendom would sink in my estimation into worthless self-delusions. How could I wish to worship a God which I had myself cut out of wood or stone? or the sun and stars which ever move in the self-same orbits, which hardly enjoy as much freedom as myself; which only exercise an influence on the growth and life of material things, and even on these produce their effects indirectly? How could I worship animals, which, however useful they may be to me, yet tremble when I threaten, and are guided by the strength of my understanding? Can man be more exalted than his God?

The true faith must make me more God-like. For, if by God I understand a being infinitely perfect, powerful, wise, and good, I may expect that the faith revealed by Him shall have power to make me also stronger, not physically, for in bodily strength the animals may surpass me, but spiritually stronger, — strong to overcome all earthly things: hunger and thirst, and outward violence and inward passions. Not until my soul has attained such capacity can I recognize it as inspired with Divine energy. I expect that the true faith shall make me wiser, that is to

say, that I shall learn from it how to make my fellow-men happy, as God makes all created beings happy. I expect that by the true faith I shall become worthy of, and fitted for eternal existence. For, though earthly excellence may pass away, spiritual excellence must endure forever, because God himself is eternal.

The faith which is truly God-inspired must be in accordance with all the claims of human reason and understanding, and must, moreover, solve satisfactorily all the dark mysteries which reason and understanding cannot penetrate. For how can I believe a faith to be truly divine if it be at variance with my reason? or how can I call that a divinely revealed truth, in which I discover a want of common sense, revolting to me even in purely human concerns?

All men are endowed with reason, and all are naturally gifted with the capacity of thought; therefore there are a number of truths which have at all times, in all climes, among all nations, and under all circumstances, been recognized as such; therefore there are things regarding the truth of which mortals never can differ. But the mental powers of all men are not equally developed. Therefore, if a faith is to be recognized as divinely inspired, it must be in harmony as well with the reason of the most highly informed and acute men, as with that of ignorant persons unaccustomed to consecutive thinking. Were this not so, then the religion bestowed by God on all mankind would not be adapted to all, and would not be comprehensible to all, and could not approve itself as truth to all! I should expect that a faith originating in heaven would be as easily understood by the unlearned as by the learned, by the child as by the

old man, and that it would act equally beneficially on all hearts.

Nay, as the human reason is bound within finite limits, and is therefore unable to comprehend supermundane things, a divine faith must satisfy the claims of reason more fully than it can do so itself. It must explain to me why my spirit is gifted with such a wealth of rare qualities, of which in this life it can make no satisfactory use, and by far the smaller number of which can here attain their true development; it must explain to me my instinctive yearning for happiness through virtue, although I frequently see vice enjoying the most brilliant earthly position, while virtue pines in misery; it must explain to me why my whole being aspires towards perfection, although I know that the hour of death must come which will put an end to all aspirations. It must show me why the All-wise has given me aspirations which seem doomed never to be satisfied, why He has endowed me with capabilities which seem destined never to attain to maturity; why He has given me this thirst for a perfect happiness through virtue and wisdom, which yet appears to be utterly beyond my reach?

I should say, further, that that faith must be truly Divine which is in most perfect harmony with the eternal order of creation. For all things that emanate from a Being of infinite perfection must be in perfect harmony with each other. If nature and revelation be both from God, they cannot be at variance with one another, nor be mutually destructive of each other, but must, on the contrary, confirm and support one another. A faith that should teach me to injure my body, to put a stop to the propagation of

the human race, or to degrade myself to the level of the animals, and to deny my human dignity, would be in contradiction with the order of the divine creation, and could not therefore be from God.

Finally, I should say, that faith must be truly divine, the teachings of which would infallibly promote the highest happiness of mankind were they followed by all men. For in the Deity I recognize the All-good Creator, who has called other beings into existence in order that they may participate in the highest bliss. Even man, had he the power of creating, would shrink from giving life to other beings in order to plunge them into eternal misery and pain. How then can we suppose that God would do so? I cannot call that religion divine which inspires man with enmity against his fellow-man. I cannot call that religion divine which makes it impossible for all men to live together in civil concord, so that universal contentment, well-being, and security may be established among them. I cannot call that religion divine which does not make all men equal before God, and does not teach that all have equal rights, but which, on the contrary, looks upon some as God's favorites, upon others as his step-children, and which acknowledges in some only a claim to his love, while to others it assigns the lot of being objects of his wrath. I cannot call such doctrines divine which I could not wish to see practiced by all mankind, because universal misery alone would be the consequence thereof.

Such would be the signs by which I should distinguish the true heaven-born faith from such religions as were invented by man. Its final object must be the infinite happiness of all spirits, the glorification of

all things earthly, the union of heaven and earth, of time and eternity, of finite existence with the infinite, and the absorption of all in the fullness of the God-head.

And were I a stranger, coming from a distant and lonely island in the ocean, whither the name or the words of Jesus had never penetrated, and I heard his doctrines and his revelations as to divine and human things, — as to what is of this earth, and what belongs to eternity, — verily, had I never before held communion with any mortal on the subject, my first exclamation would be: “He came from God, and his voice is the voice of God, and the truths which he teaches are eternal like God, and in full harmony with the whole of God’s creation;” and though no one had as yet said to me, “Believe in him, for his words give eternal life,” I should exclaim, “He who believeth in him believeth not in him, but in the One who hath sent him.”

His doctrine alone is truly Divine; and had it never been confirmed by miracles, had it never been sealed with his blood, it would be in itself a miracle, a rising sun to every darkened soul, a bond between each human being and God, a Jacob’s ladder by which man may ascend towards the Deity. No man could have invented it. He who disclosed it must have surveyed with far-seeing eye the mysterious order of the entire creation and the laws that rule it, and have known the power and the calling of the human spirit, as well as the strength of the human passions, — the foundation of states as well as the conditions of peace in each individual human heart. He must have known the thoughts of the wisest of mortals, as well as the feeble powers of mind of little

children, in order to make himself so clearly understood by both ; and who could do this before Jesus appeared? What the wisest and most learned of the ancients thought, and how they acted, is not a secret ; their opinions and their teachings are still extant in the books they wrote ; but whose wisdom comes near to that of Jesus ? Who ever embraced as he did, in the most simple connection, the most important concerns of humanity in all ages ? Who has, like him, given, in a few words, the solution of all the enigmas of life ? — yea, given these in words the truth of which is at once apparent to the wisest and to the simplest mind, — words such as these : God is our Father ; love is the sum and substance of all the commandments ; to become perfect as our Father in heaven, is the great end of all spirits ; temporal existence and eternal existence are one and inseparable.

The religion which Jesus has given us must be of Divine origin, for I recognize the hand of God in its rise and in its propagation. Who was the Lawgiver of humanity ? Who the Saviour that rescued the world from darkness ? By what power did he establish the sway of the faith which he taught over all minds ? Was he, like Moses, the chief and leader of a great people, whose least sign was obeyed by thousands, who were indebted to him for having taken them out of bondage ? Was he, like Mahomet, a fortunate warrior, who had won the enthusiastic attachment of large hosts by his victories and his eloquent words, and who led his followers on to the overthrow of thrones and the conquest of nations ? Was he the ruler of a great and powerful state, or the pupil of the most enlightened sages of his times ?

No ! He came heralded by no claims to admiration,

surrounded by no splendor, but humbly and meekly, and preaching abnegation of the world. A manger was his cradle. Ofttimes he had no place where to lay his head. No one knows his teachers, yet he grew in wisdom and understanding. Simple, ignorant men, belonging to the lower classes of the people, were his first disciples. Even the people from which he descended, in the midst of which he lived, was at that time one of the most despised of the earth, and paid tribute to a foreign master. And this singular, this incomprehensible Being stirred in its depths the world of spirits, and the change which took place in men's minds transformed all the circumstances under which the nations were living: the altars and temples of heathendom fell to the ground, thrones crumbled away, and empires vanished from the earth.

Whence did he derive this wonderful power of wisdom? Had he devoted the whole of his life to the acquirement of knowledge and the study of science? Had he been gathering, during a long series of years, experiences as to human and divine things? Far from it! He was a young man of nine and twenty years of age when he stepped forward from the obscurity of his previous life. (Luke iii. 23.) He was in the full vigor of his manhood. And at that age, when other men are most strongly moved by passion, when the senses, the love of pleasure, the greed for money, and worldly ambition, in most cases hold sway over the spirit, he came forth in his majesty, like a Being from another world, victorious over every passion, carrying out to the full his own principles, and no one was like unto him.

He refused the military leadership offered to him. He refused the throne of David, which he was invited

to ascend. He spoke of a higher kingdom which he had come to found. At first he was understood by few ; but he went his way, teaching and conquering, and foretelling the future fate of the world and of his doctrines, as though the books of Eternal Destiny lay open before his eyes. And that which he foretold, which none of his contemporaries could live long enough to verify, the truth of which only posterity could witness, has been wonderfully fulfilled in the course of ages, and of the complicated play of the world-events.

What a long period of labor and teaching was not required to establish such a kingdom of God on earth ! How many other doctrines have not been forgotten, which were taught for half a century or more, in the most populous cities of the world ! How many states which it took long years to establish have fallen into ruins in a few months ! And Christ preached mostly in lonely places ; the entire period of his public teaching hardly extended over more than three years ! He died as a young man, in the full bloom of a divinely great and perfect life !

Was this man a mortal ? Verily in him the Deity revealed Himself to mankind wonderfully, as in all his works. The Divine Son came from God, and God was with Him.

How gladly would I learn more about this Incomprehensible Being ! But all the earlier events of his life have remained unknown. The Evangelists, who wrote the history of Jesus, contented themselves with merely giving the world a narrative of his public career as a teacher. They did this in the most admirably simple and artless style, without any attempt at embellishment, and without endeavoring to dazzle

or attract. They wrote without consulting one another, and without the one having any knowledge of what the other was doing, whence many divergencies have arisen as to the general order of their narratives; and yet they substantially agree on all points, so that the one may serve to elucidate, and to interpret the other.

The faith of the Christian bears its Divine origin stamped upon it, and advances with majestic firmness between the two opposite errors of superstition and unbelief. In this faith my soul finds satisfaction, and every doubt its solution; in it I discover all that the human race most needs, and through it man finds grace before the Most Holy, and the consolation of forgiveness for his sins.

It is true, I still behold schisms and differences in the Christian Church, — and yet I confess: there is but *one* God, *one* Christ, *one* truth, and *one* Christianity! There are several Christian Churches, but only *one* Christian religion; there are several disciplines and many opinions, but *one* Christian faith only!

The simplicity and sublimity of the doctrines of Jesus were often found too high by presumptuous men, though the understanding of a child could comprehend them. Men bound in the fetters of sense endeavored to introduce improvements into them, which were alien to the words of Jesus. Jews and heathens who were converted took over with them into the new religion many of the notions connected with the old; they were too humanly weak to divest themselves at once of all the errors of their early education; often, indeed, they misunderstood the doctrines, as we may see from St. Paul, who in his time

already had to complain of the spirit of party prevailing in the Christian Church. Thus arose the various sects and ecclesiastical parties, and thus the differing religious opinions. But ought we to attribute to the Divine religion itself that which is but the fruit of human weakness? Nay, the Christian faith is simple and pure to-day as it was more than eighteen hundred years ago. We still possess the very words which Jesus spake, and the very words which his immediate disciples wrote.

The differences of opinion that exist among the various Church parties and Christian brethren in faith are but differences of human views; and in so far they must change in the course of time, which changes all things; no earthly power can prevent this. But the teachings of Jesus remain unalterably the eternal Word of God. The pure religion of Christ remains a firm rock of God to all eternity, and to it the human race is firmly bound. Yea, as certain as it is that the laws of human reason are at all times and in all regions the same, so certain is it that with advancing civilization the Christian faith will become the religion of all denizens of the earth. At present, at the expiration of only two thousand years, it is the faith of the most civilized nations of the world, and the time must come when there will be but one flock and one shepherd.

Yea, ever dearer to me than all the treasures and legacies of this world will be the faith, the Divine inheritance, which my Saviour bequeathed to me. This faith lights up the darkness that formerly enveloped the most sacred concerns of man; through it I shall become more Godlike, and be lifted up above human fears and sorrows; in it alone I shall find comfort

and courage in the storms of life, and peace and true happiness. It has reconciled me with death; it invests with new charms the world beyond the grave.

By this faith I will hold fast, however much men who are the slaves of their senses may scoff! Their mockery is a melancholy proof of their own degradation. By this faith I will hold fast, though the skeptic in his pride may seek to undermine it. Ah, unhappy man! he is at variance with himself, and having misapplied the powers of his own mind, he seeks to comfort himself by robbing others of their comfort. Despairing of his own light, he would fain learn from others whom he has led astray, how to find the right path again.

I will hold fast by this faith, O God, and by its blessed power, as I have received it into my heart through thy word spoken by Jesus; I believe in Thee, in the threefold way in which Thou hast been revealed, as Father and Creator, Almighty Wisdom and Love! I believe in Thee, Diffuser of happiness throughout the world, and in thy Son Jesus, glorified above all thy other children; I believe in Thee, All-animating and Holy Spirit, who consecrateth us to perfection like unto thine own! I believe in thee, O mine own spirit, created for immortality, and in thy final attainment of perfection through the merits of Jesus. I believe in eternity, in which there will be retribution for all spirits, and in which dwell judgment and mercy. Amen.

EVERY MAN HAS HIS PRICE.

When the world's voice bewitches,
I will her spells despise,
Nor set my soul on riches,
For wealth so swiftly flies.
As a true Christian knight,
When passions strong assail,
I'll combat, and prevail,
Through God's own holy might.

Shall I vain shadows follow,
E'en to destruction's brink,
And for some phantom hollow,
Myself, my treasure, sink?
No! That which I adore
Is Godlike, — lifts from earth;
It makes me know my worth,
And feel my value more.

O God! hear Thou my prayer;
When pressed on either hand,
Let not deception snare,
Give me the strength to stand.
Teach me a perfect faith,
To know myself, to be
Impregnable through Thee,
Triumphant e'en till death.

(GEN. xxxix. 9.)

IT is a curious trait in human nature, that each individual places the highest value on himself; treats the world as if it were only in existence on his account, looks upon himself as if he were the central point round which all things turn, — and that yet, in spite of this universal self-appreciation, so many persons make themselves the slaves of others, or of some

insignificant desire of their own. This contradiction in the human mind, this inordinate pride of men in combination with ignorance of their own true value, this insatiable self-seeking in connection with so contemptible a depreciation of themselves, is so common that we are only astonished that thoughtful persons, perceiving it in others, are not thereby led to discover it in themselves !

Every man has his price, says the proverb. And how true is the saying, — what knowledge does it not evince of the depths of the human heart ! Those who possess sufficient penetration, or sufficient knowledge of human nature, soon discover in others what price they put upon themselves, and treat them accordingly. If it be a low one, the foolish men are made the instruments of the designing ones.

Every human being puts a price upon himself. The proud and presumptuous smile and say : “ There may be poor weak creatures in the world who are willing to part with their life, their honor, their uprightness, for a mere trifle : venal judges who allow themselves to be bribed ; self-indulgent voluptuaries who may be tempted by every new opportunity to forget innocence, good name, honesty, and all else ; but to me you might offer millions of money, and all the pleasures in the world, and I should never be tempted thereby to commit a low or dishonorable act ! ” Yet try to flatter them, and you will find they give way ; offer them honors, titles, a more commanding position, and to secure to themselves these brilliant baits they will plunge entire countries into misery ; let them be placed in circumstances so desperate that were their position to be known they would lose the esteem and honor in which they are held, and they rage like mad-

men, and become deceivers, robbers, assassins, and if they cannot even by these means conceal their shame, they end perhaps with suicide! Ah, how many countries, how many thousands of happy families have been precipitated into misery by the ambition of a few selfish men! How many have not sacrificed fortune, friendship, love, and even life, to save the honor of their name or their house! The price of these men is then some outward honor or dignity, the loss of which they refuse to survive.

“They acted foolishly, no doubt,” cry others, “as does every one who burdens himself with cares and sorrows for the sake of the empty bubble, fame. Of what importance can it be whether people show us a little more or a little less outward respect? Who does not know the world and its oscillations in its judgments of men. The very person it idolizes to-day it scoffs at to-morrow. It bows its head to thee, but in its heart it despises thee. The more honors we attain, the more we have to suffer from envy and rivalry. Nay, for such a price I would not sacrifice the happiness and peace of my days or the principles that guide my actions, and still less my life.” So speaks he who would perhaps give himself away for a much lower price. Invite him to your table, and he will caress you, though he may have had the most evident proofs of your unworthiness. Place good wine before the wine-bibber, and he will drink with delight until he is intoxicated, and then in his drunkenness divulge the secrets of his friends, or use without shame the most obscene language, and agree to any infamy that may be proposed. Let him but grow poor, and be unable to carry on the same luxurious, self-indulgent life as heretofore; he will not be content with

poorer fare, he will not learn to bear unworthily the loss of his accustomed comforts, he will think death preferable to such a life of privation. Oh how many a rich epicure would become his own executioner were he suddenly to be impoverished, because he would consider it impossible to live on the reduced means which would nevertheless be sufficient to support several frugal families ! The price of this mean wretch is thus a certain number of full dishes, the juice of certain grapes, and a handsome house.

“Yes ; but such mere sensualists belong to the most contemptible of mankind,” cries another. “I would never degrade myself to the level of the animals, and live merely to tickle my palate. What to me is luxurious eating and fasting ? If my hunger is satisfied, that ought to be enough. And what are posts of honor to me ? We ought to be content if we have not to complain of envy or contempt, and if we are allowed to live in peace, undisturbed by hatred or malice. Nay, to be ready to sacrifice friendship, love, peace of mind, and life for such a price, proves that a man has fallen into the very lowest depths of degradation.” Thus speak some. But what price do they put upon themselves, these very persons, endowed with such virtuous principles, and who are so prone to blame others ? Put out the gaming-tables, exhibit cards and dice in the light of the brilliant lustres ; gather together a party to try the sudden changes of luck, — and gone is every vestige of noble pride ! The unfortunates rush to the tables. They who at other times may be full of feeling, become hardened against the losses of others ; they who at other times are the very soul of honor in all their dealings, now, for the sake of gains of which they ought to be ashamed,

allow themselves to have recourse to all kinds of base tricks, as long as they can hope to avoid detection. These men at other times the tenderest of husbands and fathers, when seized by this infernal passion, no longer think of wife or children, but gamble away all that the latter have to depend upon. The misery of wife and child touches them not; the tears, the supplications, the warnings of friends and superiors, the contempt of inferiors, all are in vain. They gamble on; and when at last fortune turns away her false face from them, and, deprived of means, without one resource left, they find themselves mocked at and despised by those who are dividing their spoils, then despair drives them into all kinds of villainy. In order to be able to gamble again, and perhaps recover what they have lost, they make use of money held in trust for others, they deceive their superiors, they become forgers and perjurers, they sink deeper and deeper in crime, until at length the measure of their iniquity is full, and they destroy their life with their own guilty hands. Alas! how many a man who, by his other excellent qualities, might have been held high in esteem, has ruined himself and his family past redemption through his unhappy passion for gambling! The price of such men is, therefore, the passion for a pastime destructive both to mind and health, — the passion for the excitement caused by the sudden changes of fortune experienced when gambling with cards or dice.

Every man has a price for which he gives himself away. THEREFORE YOU ALSO HAVE YOUR PRICE. And what is the price at which you value yourselves, with your faith, your honesty, your innocence? You seem struck with amazement. You doubt whether

there be any price on earth for which you would give away yourselves, — your peace in this world, and your salvation in the next. Have you, then, up to the present day, been so entirely proof against all temptations that you have yielded to none, not even to the most enticing? Have you invariably turned away with a shudder from the luring sin, when your honesty, your chastity, your peace of heart, your fidelity to right, were in danger, as did Joseph when he was tempted and he cried, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”

It is possible that the passion for gambling never touches you, but can you say the same as to vanity? Or if vanity never leads you to commit acts derogatory to your true dignity, does dislike to others never tempt you into false steps? Or if it be not hatred, is it pride? And if not pride, are you never tempted by carnal lusts? Or if not by these, by greed for riches and gain? Or if not by covetousness, by fear of contempt? Or if not by fear of contempt, yet by obstinacy, or even by malignant joy at the misfortunes of others? Alas! were I to recapitulate the long list of human weaknesses, you would perhaps be forced to admit that there are several prices at which you would sell yourselves. Blame not the warrior who stakes his life for small pay! Blame not the mariner who exposes himself in a frail bark to the caprice of the wind and the waves, because he risks his life for trifling gain! It is their business and their trade; but thou, thou dost sacrifice for far more transient and worthless gains, honor, well-being, virtue, and domestic happiness.

Every man has a price at which he sells himself. What is thy price? Hast thou ever weighed how

much thou art really worth? Go into thy chamber and devote some moments of earnest thought to an examination of thyself, and try to discover for what earthly good thou wouldst be likely to give thyself away. Look no farther back than the past year; pass in review thy secret thoughts and silent wishes even of the last few weeks only! Ah! a short while will no doubt suffice to show thee thy weak points, which, had they been assailed by any tempter, would soon have revealed to thee at what price thou wouldst have sold thy goodness, thy Christian principles, thy heaven on earth, thy eternal prospects. Thou shudderest? Thou wouldst rather not look into thyself? But if thou valuest thy goodness, thy Christian principles, thy heaven on earth, thy eternal prospects, ah, shrink not from this self-investigation! It is a great and decisive moment in thy life, when thou beholdest thine own deadly weaknesses and the dreadful rocks which every moment threaten the safety of thy soul. Perhaps it depends upon this very moment, which forces self-knowledge upon thee, whether thou wilt ever give away thyself, and all that thou now holdest sacred, for a contemptible reward, for the satisfaction of some low desire, for some trifling consideration; or whether, exercising noble self-control, thou wilt ever cling to God and possess thyself.

Every man has his price at which he sells himself. Dost thou know thine own price, thine own value?

Alas, O Omniscient God! Abashed, I cast down my eyes before Thee. I am not worthy of the love and mercies Thou hast showered upon me from my early youth. How noble is the dignity with which Thou hast invested me, how paltry, how contemptible

the value I have placed upon myself. I am thy creature, O God, thy child, O merciful Father, — and I render myself unworthy of thy loving-kindness, for the sake of some low, sensual enjoyment, some base pleasure. I am a human being. I stand high in the graduated scale of all God-created beings; high above myriads of other creatures, who have neither reason, nor knowledge, nor revelation, all of which have been vouchsafed to me; and yet, dishonoring myself, I forget and destroy my inherent human nobility for the sake of things which even the animals, naturally so inferior to me, do not value. In my hopes and my loves, in my sympathies and my antipathies, I but too frequently lower myself to the level of the brutes.

I am born for immortality! The portals of eternity have opened to me a prospect of bliss of which I cannot here below form even an approximate conception. A thousand other beings die daily at my feet. They were, but are no more. But I, more exalted than they, enlightened by God, I am destined for immortality. And how have I deserved this preference, this exalted lot, above millions of other created beings? Woe is me, I have already sold the nobility of my soul for the vilest price, for the gratification of my sensual desires or my foolish fancies, or to conform with some human prejudice. Ah, how often have I not sacrificed the peace of my life in order to gratify my angry feelings, my vanity, or my lusts. I have sold my hopes of perfection, my claims of eternal happiness, for a handful of perishable dross. I have been bought and redeemed from death by the blood and sufferings of Jesus. He, the Divine Man, came and showed me the way to the Father; He sanctified

my spirit by his teachings; and on Golgotha He sealed with his blood the holy work of redemption. But woe is me, for when tempted I have thought but little of the lessons by which He endeavored to purify me from sin; and how rarely have I performed deeds of faith, though thoughtlessly professing with my lips the words of faith! I have sacrificed myself and Jesus' work of redemption in order to satisfy a wish which a few minutes after I repented of. How weak, how worthless have I not often approved myself; I, a God-created, exalted being, destined for eternity, redeemed by Jesus!

I shudder at my own shortcomings. Why have I so often yielded? Have I lacked warnings and lessons? Have I not been admonished by the words of Jesus, by parents and relatives, by solemn promises demanded of me, by serious events in life, all of which have placed before me the dreadful consequences of wrong-doing? Why have I so seldom exercised the self-control which ought to be the attribute of a being of such exalted destiny, and through which alone I can rise above the animals, who are guided by their passions and their blind instincts? What has been my reward for sacrificing my better self in this way? Alas! fleeting pleasure, and but too often enduring pain and bitter repentance! Why are so many human beings inwardly discontented and unhappy? Because they have sold themselves at a vile price, and are paying the penalty of their folly.

Blessed be the hour in which, by God's care and long-suffering, I have been led to look earnestly within, and to recognize the vile price at which I have been in danger of giving myself away. I shall now spurn it when offered, and when again tempted in a

manner that would lead to degradation, I will look up to heaven, to my destination in eternity, and to Him who wrestled for me in Gethsemane, and say, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Dead ashes may be exchanged for dead ashes, and merchandise for merchandise; but the virtue of my spirit must never be given in exchange for the satisfaction of some ignoble, earthly desire; my constant inward contentment must not be sacrificed to a momentary intoxication of the heart and the senses. "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26.)

The truths taught by Jesus Christ, the Christian virtues, the approval of God, must not be given away for any price; for what thing in the universe has any value, if divine things be not above all price? For these the Divine Man sacrificed his own holy life, when the world of sinners condemned Him; for these the holy apostles of Jesus died amid dreadful sufferings; for these the first Christians bore joyfully poverty, persecution and shame, chains and tortures, and for these they calmly encountered death. Therefore the names of these just ones shine forth, to this day, in the annals of men and in the records of heaven. Their greatness of soul, their power of self-control and self-abnegation inspire us, to this day, with rapturous admiration. Yea, there is still something that is exalted above earthly power and dignities, above gold and beauty and fame, and all that the senses rejoice in. There is still something that cannot be bought for all the bright things of this life which our secret desires may be vaunting to us, as the tempter vaunted the glory of the earth to the Saviour in the

desert and on the mountain-top. And this is the image of God in a virtuous human spirit, whose eyes are lifted above the dust of this earthly existence, and are turned towards eternal things.

But this image of God, alas! how blurred and indistinct is it not in me! Merciful Father, may I, — sinful as I am, — may I look up to Thee? May I still pray to Thee? I shudder at my own unworthiness. God, my God, I would fain pray to Thee! Be merciful to me, a poor sinner! Amen.

PATIENCE AND GENTLENESS SUBDUE ALL HEARTS.

Yes, Father, yes, it shall be granted me,
O'er all my foes to gain the victory.
Not strong in pride, will I their faults reprove,
But win by love.

Humble, like Christ, — still ready to upbear
The poor and weak, the bruised reed to spare,
With tender hand to raise up those that fall,
Forgiving all.

Ever in haste to put mistrust to flight,
To bind shall be my work, not disunite;
To calm with soothing touch the festering smart
Of the sick heart.

So shall I dwell in holy peace divine,
Sparing men's frailties, they shall pity mine.
So shall I too, upheld, O Lord, through Thee,
Forgiven be.

(1 PETER ii. 23.)

EVERY age, every rank, and even each sex, has some passion or fault peculiar to itself. But the desire to be the foremost everywhere, to possess advantages that others do not possess, and to rule over others, is common to all. Few persons will be found who are entirely exempt from this longing for preëminence, whence springs in some cases a craving for fame, in others for riches, in others for beauty, or for knowledge; in some instances a contempt of danger, in others a contempt for virtue itself; on one side self-sacrifice, on the other gross selfishness. We

are almost tempted to say that most of men's virtues and vices spring from the same root.

This craving for distinction, honors, and rank, which dwells as much in the young as in the old, is in fact nothing but a perversion of the natural desire to give expression to the yearning for development and perfection which is inborn in all. This yearning after perfection was implanted in us by God. It is this which keeps all our other desires and feelings in activity. It is this that has tamed the savage man, has polished the rude, has enriched the poor, has made the indolent active, has taught the ignorant knowledge, has inspired the timid with courage. It is this alone that makes the highest virtue possible.

I say, it was God that implanted in us this yearning after excellence ; because there is no man on earth in whose bosom it does not dwell, and without it we should be morally dead, indifferent to good and evil. Christ himself appealed to this desire for high perfection, and made it one of the fundamental pillars of his edifice of faith.

However, when this inborn aspiration degenerates, it no longer seeks the wished-for preëminence in the highest cultivation of the spirit ; not in that which, because of its immortal nature, is alone capable of perfection, — but in outward, earthly things, which do not depend upon ourselves, and the transient nature of which in itself renders them incapable of developing into true excellence. Thus perverted, the craving for preëminence leads to the most injurious consequences. It is ever present in men's minds, and yet can never satisfy them ; it drives them passionately through life, in search of a haven of rest which is never found ; and the highest good which it places

within their grasp, after pain and trouble unspeakable, is soon found to be but a fleeting shadow, that vanishes while they try to hold it fast. Beauty fades as years accumulate; large fortunes melt away through various mischances; high posts are lost with the favor of princes; fame is diminished by envy; thrones are upset by rivals; and all are blotted out by the cold hand of death. Without one treasure, without one preëminent virtue, the immortal spirit, forgotten and neglected in life, stands then poor and denuded.

But in addition to its evil effects as to each individual soul, this perverted craving for preëminence, like every other deviation of man from the path which nature, reason, and faith indicate, fills the world with misery beyond expression. It is this which destroys empires, which holds nations in thralldom, which ruins and disperses families. Disunion, pride, luxuriousness, vanity, malicious envy, poisonous slander, joy at the misfortunes of others, avarice, deception, hypocrisy, raging anger, — alas, who can enumerate the manifold vices which follow in the wake of false ambition and the craving for worldly distinction!

And yet, if we look around us, we find this craving everywhere prevalent. If we lay our hands on our hearts, we feel it stirring there also. Thence the want of harmony on all sides; thence so much disunion and contention. Thence the proud and angry feelings that awaken in us when we are contradicted, or believe our worth to be in the least under-estimated by others. Thence the absence of gentle submission, of consideration for our neighbors, of honest respect for their good qualities, and thence the rarity of true friendship.

Let us examine our own hearts ; let us ask ourselves whether our self-will, our obstinacy, and our unyielding disposition, does not often cause us to disturb the domestic peace, to rend the ties of friendship, to call forth discontent and enmity in others, because we are intent upon establishing *our* superiority, *our* liberty of thought and action, *our* opinions, as against those of others ? And yet we cannot bear to see others conduct themselves in the same way towards us. What we do or desire, we call *right* ; what others do or demand, we call presumption, love of domineering, inordinate self-esteem, and obstinacy.

How then canst thou be surprised that the world shows thee so little love and respect, that so few persons are truly devoted to thee ? Is it not thyself who has mistaken the way to their hearts ? Is it not thyself that in thine error hast forced them to hate thee instead of loving thee ? If thou wouldst govern, learn first how to do so. By violent means thou canst only create slaves who will curse thee ; by craft thou canst for a short while deceive the short-sighted, but they will soon unmask thee, and the tyrant is despised, the wily deceiver is looked upon with disgust.

If thou wouldst govern men, teach thy tongue to be modestly silent, and let thy acts speak. That which in reality deserves reverence will receive it, even from the greatest villain, and that which is really amiable has never yet awakened a feeling of dislike. Now ask thyself whether the conduct of others towards thee entitles thee to suppose that thou possessest virtues which call forth reverence and love ? Many persons no doubt possess numerous good qualities, and every man probably possesses at

least one virtue, but with this perhaps also some fault so offensive that it dims and outweighs all the good that is in him. Dost thou imagine that thou canst enforce the same esteem for thy faults as for thy merits? If so, thou art mistaken. The judgment of men concerning thee will ever remain free. Witnesses may be suborned, not so hearts. Limbs may be fettered, not so minds. Whatever is bad will always be called bad, and whatever is good and noble will be called good and noble.

Therefore complain not of other men's hearts, but of thine own faults, which arouse the hostility of those with whom thou art to live, instead of attracting their love. Avoid in regard to others that which thou findest blameworthy in their conduct towards thee. Learn to bear their faults with patience, and be gentle and courteous in thy demeanor to every one. This is an unfailing means of subduing all hearts. Follow the Divine example of Jesus Christ, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously." (1 Peter ii. 23.)

Perhaps thy pride, or, as thou wouldst call it, thy self-respect, revolts at this advice. "I cannot act thus," thou sayest; "it is not given to me to do so. Why should I be silent when I am right? Why should I tamely submit when I am insulted? Why should I not show my indignation when I see wrong done?"

In speaking thus, O friend, thou betrayest the poverty of thy heart, as regards all truly great qualities. If thou didst indeed stand higher than thy fellow-men, their contradictions, their errors, their

perversity would not stir thine ire, and their insults would only make thee smile. The mighty lion walks on calmly and undisturbed by the little dog who barks at him. If thou hast never experienced this noble feeling of superiority, thou wilt hardly be able to understand me. If thou knowest it, then why dost thou not strive always to retain it?

Thou art not to be silent when thou art in the right; thou art to speak, but with gentleness. Thou art not to nod assent when thou seest injustice committed; thou must try and see justice done, but gently. Thou art not to smile with contentment when any one insults thee; thou must stand up for thyself, but with gentleness. Noisy anger, unbending self-will, obstinate insistence on rights, and a love of contradiction, will only call forth anger and resistance in others, and thou wilt add wrong on thine own side to wrong on theirs.

Perhaps thou sayest to thyself: "It is very well to recommend this, but it is impossible always to be moderate. It is not given to every one to be able to master and restrain himself when burning with indignation." But to this I reply: What man wills to do, he has the power to do, and when he really wills it he can restrain himself. Thou, also, art able to restrain thyself when thou art in the presence of persons whose position inspires thee with respect. It is, therefore, to the weak only, O coward, that thou showest thy courage, or to those whom thou mayest defy without danger to thyself; in the presence of higher and mightier persons it is fear, not anger, that rules thee.

Attempt not to excuse thyself; thine own conscience accuses thee of falsehood. Thou also canst, if

thou wilt, but thou wilt not, because by showing thy anger, by threats and stinging words, thou hopest to make others submissive and slavishly obedient. This is thy real aim, — why, therefore, dost thou complain that in the hearts of other men thou findest no faithful attachment, no tender love, no true esteem? The fault is not in the others, but in thyself. Who would expect to purchase loving embraces with sword-cuts? Who can expect to win affection by hard and bitter words?

Patience and gentleness alone subdue all hearts. They pacify the angry, disarm the most violent, and lure on love and admiration. One man is generally, without specially willing so to be, the echo of another. Love is met with love, pride with pride, anger with anger. Why then dost thou bewail the dissensions in life, the contentions in thy home? Give first to others what thou askest of them, and they will return it to thee. Gentleness calls forth gentleness, impetuosity provokes contradiction.

Patience and gentleness subdue all hearts. Patience with the faults of others springs from the consciousness of our own value, and of how much are we exalted above all petty insults. A man of worth cannot possibly be hurt by the presumption of a man of no worth, nor a noble mind by a fool's pride in his prejudice; nor a person rich in virtues by the abuse of the vulgar-minded, nor a strong man by the blow of a child's hand.

Gentleness springs from the love and respect which we owe to all men as such, and which we have a right to expect from them in return. Gentleness is always the distinguishing mark of superior wisdom and superior virtue; it is one of the loveliest blossoms of

magnanimity of soul. The more abject and degraded a man is, the more he will be given to cursing, swearing, quarreling, and abusing.

God cannot know anger, nor can the true sage who is God-like in mind. In the capacity of parent or superior, he may express disapproval of what is wrong, but he will set matters right again without violence; when the duties of his office demand it he will punish faults, but with the loving intention of improving the criminal; when his own rights are attacked he will defend them, but without violence or asperity; and when injustice is done to him which he cannot prevent, he will prove how little he has deserved such treatment, but he will not seek revenge, or return like for like.

Patience and gentleness can alone subdue the hearts of men. But this gentleness is in no way allied to that pride which looks down with disdain on every opponent; such pride is the result of silent wrath, not of the feeling of our own true value, which is ever veiled in modesty. The pride to which I have alluded is the silent, yet cunningly calculated language of anger, which seeks a bitterer revenge than can be expressed by hard and taunting words. The restraint which anger thus puts upon itself is not gentleness, but premeditated cruelty; not love, but hatred.

True gentleness is tranquil friendliness, mild earnestness, which involuntarily inspires or commands a similar state of mind in others. It does not, however, consist in a set smile, which becomes mawkish in its unalterable sweetness, because it is no true index of cheerful tranquillity of mind, but only a grimace and a mask. A person who smiles on every occasion and at everything, either proves himself to

be deficient in mind and culture, or in heart and true feeling. He smiles even when he harbors malice ; he smiles even when contempt is heaped upon him. He is devoid of delicacy of feeling, both as regards himself and as regards others.

The gentleness of the Christian, on the contrary, is founded on true and deep feeling. A wise man is not indifferent to the love and respect of others ; and therefore he treats an angry person with such consideration as seems due to one, who, being intoxicated, is not in full possession of his reason. He shows that he is not indifferent to being misjudged, and therefore endeavors to calm down the person who misunderstands him, and to bring him into a state of mind that will render it more easy to form a dispassionate judgment. It is in consequence of the wise man's correct feeling of his own value, that, when he has committed a fault, he willingly confesses his error. This frankness disarms his opponents and diminishes honorably the offence, which would only be increased by denial, or must awaken doubts as to the goodness of heart of the person who would defend it as a righteous act.

Gentleness, when coupled with proper feeling, wins all hearts, for in such case it indulgently excuses every thoughtless act of a fellow-man, and bears patiently with his weaknesses and peculiarities, without burning incense before them. For flattery and fawning are as far from being gentleness as hypocrisy is from being virtue. The wise man desires only to promote peace, and mutual esteem, toleration and consideration, from which alone domestic and public happiness can spring ; the flatterer proceeds craftily, leading men on for his own purposes and turning

their passions to his own advantage. The wise man places his dignity and his happiness in being able always to act with full self-possession, and free from the fetters of any strong passion. The flatterer, on the contrary, tries to rob others of their self-possession and their freedom, by blinding them or lulling them to sleep with deserved or undeserved praise. Gentleness is a constant mood of the mind in the true Christian; flattery is a temporary expedient, which ceases when circumstances alter.

A man ought to unite with gentleness dignity; a woman, kindly grace. He wins by the influence of his calmness and moderation on the understandings of those that surround him; she, by the effect of her amiability on those that approach her.

A Christian bears even the direst calamities with dignity: he retains it even when bound in the fetters of the tyrant who persecutes him. Even while railed at, scorned, and jeered at by the base mob, he is imposing in his majesty. Jesus bore with meekness and patience the insults which the raging multitude heaped upon Him; when He was reviled, He reviled not again; and when He suffered, He threatened not. Amidst the gibes and jeers of the people He dragged his cross to the place of execution on the hill, but his dignity did not forsake Him even at that dread moment. He bore the shame with meekness and spake: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me; weep for yourselves and for your children!" And with such majesty did He encounter the most painful death, that even amidst the brutal multitude cries arose, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

Just as the dignity of man, which blends so harmoniously with his gentleness, is not an assumed and

artificial manner, but is the spontaneous expression of the consciousness of his own strength and worth, so is the kindly grace of woman, with which the meekness of the Christian blends so beautifully, an outgrowth of her very nature; for it is not the nature of woman to govern by strength and pugnacious defiance, but by sweetness and loving submission. Physically of more delicate frame than man, she cannot command obedience and respect by the fear she inspires, but only by her kind and gracious manners and conduct. Anger disfigures a man, but it degrades a woman, and renders her repulsive and ridiculous. An angry man, if his indignation be inspired by his feeling for innocence, right, and truth, as opposed to malice, may call forth respect; an angry woman desecrates the holiest of causes because she desecrates herself.

Patience and gentleness subdue all hearts. Gentleness wrenches the dagger from the uplifted hand of the infuriated, and stays the curse which is about to drop from the lips of the wrathful. It extracts the bitterness from envy, and makes the blush of shame rise to the face of the malignant slanderer. This virtue, one of the loveliest inculcated by Christianity, is a child of heaven, which spreads around itself the peace of heaven. Life becomes sweeter in the neighborhood of a man who is always cheerful and temperate, and of whom we know that, although he disapproves of our faults, he will not wound us with hard words; who is always willing to allow justice where it is due, and who, with amiable modesty, would rather suffer wrong when no one else can be injured thereby, than obstinately insist on being right, and thus risk losing a heart that is attached to him.

Gentleness subdues all hearts and also ennobles them. Not only vice is seductive, virtue is so likewise, and in equal measure. Who can resist the charms of love and kindness, and who would wish to meet them otherwise than with equal kindness? Who can insult a meek and gentle person without at once blushing at his own vileness? Who would give himself up to unrestrained passion when he has the happiness of beholding undisturbed equanimity of mind ever beaming on him from a cheerful, smiling countenance?

Father in heaven, Thou who art ever the same, ever indulgent, ever long-suffering, ever loving! How often have I not forgotten the surest, most innocent, most worthy means of establishing happiness in my family, and of diffusing it through all my other social relations. Have I not been the one chiefly to blame when friends have cooled towards me; when opponents have become more incensed against me; when enemies have grown more irreconcilable in their hatred; when good people have lost their esteem for me? Have I not been the first to err when my ill-temper has called forth the ill-temper of others; when my love of contradiction has stimulated contradiction in others? Have I not by my harshness towards friends, and also towards those with whom I am only slightly acquainted, drawn down upon myself the harsh judgments of others, and have I any right to claim indulgence when I am so often wanting in it even to those I love best? Have I not myself poured into the hearts of others the gall which is so bitter to my taste in their conduct towards me?

Lustrous exemplar of my mental life, O Jesus Christ, meek friend of man! Divinely patient suf-

ferer ! May not I come near to Thee in these virtues also ? Yea, the peace and happiness of my life depend upon the presence of that lovable state of mind which Thou didst manifest so gloriously in thy life. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

LEARN TO RESPECT THOSE WHO ARE INFERIOR TO THEE.

Let not the man by God more blest,
Regard with scorn the care-opprest,
Who, poor and fainting 'neath their load,
Tread wearily life's thorny road.

Nor let him dream, though great and free,
And rich in joy his lot may be,
That raised o'er right, and duty's call,
He shall not give account of all.

Hath he more time, more wealth, or lore,
So let him serve mankind the more ;
He highest, most like Christ is found,
Who spreads most happiness around.

Unenvying his well-earned height,
The poor rejoices in his might,
Who strives, unconscious of his own,
To make his neighbor's virtues known.

(SIRACH xi. 2-6.)

JUST as distinct as are ambition and the craving for notoriety from the true desire for perfection, just as distinct are pride and presumption from the simple consciousness of our own good qualities.

The aim of the ambitious is to be distinguished above others, but they are indifferent as to whether it be by the public recognition of true merit, or through mere good luck and the favor of the great and powerful. Those who are possessed by the love of notoriety, thirst for the pleasure of being known, spoken of, and admired by the multitude, without being very particular as to whether the qualities in themselves

which attract notice be such as work for the weal or the woe of mankind. The yearning after greatness of soul and spiritual perfection is felt by the truly wise and virtuous, by the real Christian only, and springs from the consciousness of what we ought to be, in order to fulfill our high destiny. Ambition and love of notoriety work for an earthly guerdon, and even when they achieve great and useful things, they have their reward in their success. "They have their reward." (Matt. vi. 2.) But the noble yearning of the soul for inward perfection and elevation can find no satisfaction in or through earthly things. It aspires towards the highest, the most Divine aim : towards likeness to God. Therefore it can accomplish the greatest and most useful things without a thought as to whether men will notice and honor the agent. It can perform the most meritorious acts without any view to the admiration of contemporaries or of posterity.

Pride is a loftiness of demeanor and an overbearingness of feeling assumed in consequence of the possession of certain advantages not participated in by others ; presumption is an exulting in a fancied superiority over others, or a boastful display of qualities to which undue value is attributed. But the self-esteem springing from the simple consciousness of our inward worth is the tribute which virtue pays to itself, it is the quiet cheerfulness of a good conscience, which shuns the contact of everything ignoble or impure. Pride and presumption manifest themselves in contempt or depreciation of others, true self-esteem in firm adherence to what is best in ourselves, in modest recognition of our own failings, and in joyful acknowledgment of such merits in others as announce

to us the existence of a noble soul, and of principles in harmony with our own.

But truly wise and great men, that is to say, true Christians, are rare, therefore the existence of genuine self-esteem is also rare. Delusive self-love diminishes in our eyes the faults that disfigure ourselves, and exaggerates the merit of whatever good we may attempt or contemplate. Few of us are sufficiently impartial fully to acknowledge the merits of other people, and to honor them with unfeigned admiration, or without tacking on a little qualifying "but" when forced to praise. Few persons have sufficient elevation of mind to attach no more value than is due to such advantages as are but gifts of chance or of nature, or which have no bearing on the important things of life; on the contrary, most persons are apt to bestow on these, even when possessed by others, the admiration which belongs solely to true merit, and they are more especially prone to give themselves up to immoderate exultation when such advantages fall to their own lot.

As long as the joy inspired by advantages or comforts which we derive from nature or from fortunate circumstances expresses itself merely in simple satisfaction at their possession, and we hold in mind that we owe them not to any merit of our own, but that they are ours only through God's grace, then our pleasure in them may be perfectly innocent. But it becomes blameworthy, and even sinful, when it expresses itself in depreciation of other persons because they are not what we are, or do not possess what we possess.

Can anything be more displeasing than the self-vaunting conceit of those who, because favored by

nature and circumstances they are able to develop mental qualities, and to acquire knowledge and experience surpassing those of less fortunate individuals, look down with disdainful pity on their fellow-men who are less gifted, or less learned, or less skillful than themselves ; or who scornfully depreciate the understanding and the acquirements of others, in order to make their own talents shine the more ; or who will not acknowledge the force of anything which they have not themselves thought, or said, or done ; always putting forward their little " I," lest it should be ignored or forgotten by others ? This self-conceit is a fault peculiar to entire classes, whose vocation it is to render themselves useful by their mental acquirements ; it is, therefore, commonly called artist pride, or the scholar's pride ; but it may also be called professional pride, for it is found in the handicraftsman as well as in the statesman, in the priest as well as in the warrior.

This pride is in itself just as offensive and as repellant as purse pride, also called the trader's pride, and the peasant's pride, because it is supposed to belong more especially to these two classes. This puffing-up of one's self because one can afford to have better clothes, better food, better furniture than other people, and the pleasure felt in impressing this superiority on others, are the more senseless, as the benefits on which they are based are not only of such a transient nature that they may vanish in a moment, but are frequently not even the fruits of a man's own industry, and are limited to the lowest enjoyment of which human nature is capable, namely, the gratification of mere bodily and animal tastes.

But equally irrational is the vanity of those who,

proud of their beauty (a fleeting good which at the longest can last but a few years), or of their fine apparel and costly ornaments, fancy that these advantages give them a real superiority over others, upon whom as not possessing them they look down with pitying contempt. Alas! how greatly are they mistaken. Beauty that is self-conscious has already lost its greatest attraction, and the expression that denotes an amiable disposition far exceeds every other charm. Those who pay too great tribute to their own merits are apt to obtain even less than is their due from others.

Therefore, also, the arrogance of those who pride themselves on their birth, their pedigree, their rank, or their titles, seldom attains its object. This pride, which will hardly admit that persons of inferior birth or position are of the same nature as their superiors, or have the same rights or claims in life, obscures any merit which those who are governed by it may in reality possess. He who exalts himself too much is placed all the lower by others, because his overweening pretensions remind them that it is not pedigree and rank that confer honor on a man, but that a man must do honor to his pedigree and his rank. But he who with noble humility seeks not to exalt himself, — he is placed high by others. For seeing that real greatness of soul which causes him to attach no importance to his outward circumstances and worldly distinctions, others are reminded all the more forcibly of how much he is worth in himself, and they feel that the love and esteem entertained for him are independent of the accidental advantages of birth and position.

We therefore see that among the great and power-

ful of the earth, those are the most heartily revered by their subordinates, and the most admired by strangers, who, though possessing great power, are modest; who, though wealthy, are simple and without ostentation, and who, forgetful of empty splendor and senseless vanities, are intent only on the performance of noble duties. The pride of power is always the surest means of diminishing the very power that inspires it; for it calls forth legitimate opposition, and the strength of opponents increases when actively exercised. "Many tyrants have been forced to take their seat upon the ground; and crowns have been placed upon the heads of those of whom no one thought. Many great lords have fallen low, and mighty kings have fallen into the hands of others." (Sirach xi. 5, 6.)

THEREFORE HOLD NO ONE IN CONTEMPT, AND NEVER HURT THE FEELINGS OF ANOTHER BY THE DISPLAY OF THINE OWN SUPERIOR ADVANTAGES. Even worldly prudence inculcates this rule; religion imposes it as a duty.

Undue appreciation of our own qualities in every case betrays weakness either of the head or of the heart; very frequently of both. Do we not know from personal experience how offensive to our feelings are the pride and presumption of other persons, how revolting the conduct of those who endeavor to humiliate us by a sense of their superiority? Well, these very feelings we call forth in others, when we give even the slightest evidence before them of how much we exult in the possession of qualities or perfections in which they are failing. Instead of humiliating them, we only stir up their pride. Instead of securing for ourselves respect and admiration, we in-

spire opposite feelings, namely secret ridicule, contempt, and dislike. Now, when a person acts so senselessly as to do the very reverse of what he desires to do, he gives evidence of weakness of understanding.

In addition to this, any one who prides himself upon his superiority over others, generally becomes the slave of the very persons above whom he thinks himself so elevated. For how much of the enjoyment of life does he not sacrifice in order to secure to himself the exalted opinion of those whose approval is hardly worth soliciting! And how imperceptibly does he not become the servant of those who are cunning enough to avail themselves of his weakness by flattering his vanity and pride! A proud person is always the most easy to guide. You have but to recognize his pretensions, and he is in your power. He fancies that he is idolized, and he becomes the football of the designing, the instrument of the ambition, the blind contributor to the self-seeking, of others, and he is set aside and forgotten by his flatterers when he is no more needed for the attainment of their ends.

Look down upon no one, treat no one with contempt, and pride not thyself on thine own advantages. For such presumption is always offensive, and is never forgiven. Every individual bears within himself the feeling of his own rights, and demands that others should respect them. Every one knows what he is worth in his own position, and cannot with equanimity bear the attempts of others to destroy, as it were, this elevating consciousness. Besides, many persons attach but little value to the very distinction on which thou primest thyself. Thou vauntest thy-

self of thy rank, which, perhaps, others have repeatedly refused ; of thy riches and possessions, for which others care naught, because they have as much as they want ; of thy knowledge and thy skill, while the interests and the desires of others are turned in another direction ; of thy beauty of face and figure, while the tastes of men differ so greatly, that what one admires another thinks displeasing. The less, therefore, others appreciate that which thou wouldst impose upon them as of surpassing value, the more are they hurt by thy latent or thy unconcealed pride ; the more offensive to them is thy presumption and thy depreciation of others. They feel they have not deserved this, and are therefore the more deeply wounded by the contempt in which thou holdest them. The instances are rare in which proud persons have escaped humiliation even in this world. Whoever rouses hostile antagonism thoughtlessly prepares discomfiture for himself and malicious joy for others. There is a warning truth in the old proverb : Pride must have a fall. “ Be not uplifted because of thy apparel, and be not proud because of thy dignities,” says an ancient sage, “ for the Lord is incomprehensible in his ways, and no one knows what may be his will.”

Hold no one in contempt because he is less or has less than thou. For the advantages thou possessest are not the highest possessed by man. No one comprises within himself all perfections. God has endowed men with various qualities through means of which they may become useful and valuable ; none of these qualities are contemptible. Therefore honor not so much the good which thou possessest as that which others possess and which thou lackest, and strive to

become like unto them therein. Even the lowliest being, whom thou considerest hardly worthy of a look, may perhaps exceed thee in most valuable qualities; dost thou know him so intimately that thou shouldst undertake to decide what he is worth? No man is so bad that he has not some good side; no man so inferior that he may not exceed thee in some kind of skillfulness, in some useful quality. "The bee is a small insect," says Sirach, "and yet produces the sweetest honey." He who turns the talent received from God to the best account, and proves most useful in his position and in his time, he is the most worthy of esteem, be his sphere of action high or low, wide or narrow. Not what we *are*, as to worldly position, but what we *do*, — not what we *have*, but the use we make of it, — determines our value. Therefore look not down upon that which is lower in man, but upwards to that which is higher; fix not thy attention upon what thou hast, but upon that which others have which thou hast not. For that which thou lackest is of far more importance as regards thy merit than that which thou possessest.

Look not with contempt on any one, but even shouldst thou feel contempt for thy fellow-men, beware never to let it appear, for thou wilt be preparing discomfiture for thyself. Many a person may be too powerless to do thee good; but no mortal is so powerless that he may not some day do thee an injury. "Vaunt no one because of the great honor in which he is held, for perchance it may be his misfortune, neither despise a man because of his lowly estate." (Sirach.) However insignificant the place of an individual in the social fabric, he may, by a special combination of circumstances, become very important to

thee. Man is not powerful by his own strength alone, but by the force of circumstances which conspire in his favor. It is not an unheard-of event that poor servants have become the supporters of their former masters ; that the bread of the beggar has appeased the hunger of the rich ; that common varlets have saved the lives of princes ; that slaves have given freedom to their masters. And equally numerous are the cases in which individuals, poor, insignificant, and powerless, have caused the ruin of the richest, most learned, most powerful, or most important personages. Thou knowest not what thy fate may be in future, still less what may be the fortunes of those whom thou now despisest. Perhaps in a few years a lucky concatenation of events may place them in so favorable a position that thou wilt consider it an honor to be reckoned among the friends of one whom to-day in thy pride thou lookest down upon.

But above all it is religion that must deter us from the melancholy aberration of heart and mind called pride, by reminding us that God, our Father in heaven, is also the God of the lowliest of our fellow-men ; that the wise man is the brother of the ignorant, as the king is the brother of the beggar, and as the loveliest maiden is the sister of the least attractive one ; while lowliness may also be taught us by the example of Jesus, who, notwithstanding his high wisdom and his god-like qualities and virtues, always remained touchingly faithful to his noble humility and self-abnegation. Indeed, how can we be proud of things which do not in reality belong to us, which are only talents intrusted to us by God for our earthly life ; alas ! perhaps not even for so long, perhaps only for a few short years !

O God, have we then received thy benefits in order that we may proudly boast of them to other children of thine, or in order that we may use them for their good? Away, then, with this senseless pride in gifts which we have obtained from Thee without any merit of our own; gifts for the use we have made of which we must one day account to Thee!

Pride of any kind is an aberration of the mind. Therefore it is also of all the passions the one that most frequently leads to real madness. Nay, Father in heaven, I will watch myself, lest the innocent pleasure with which I regard the talent Thou hast intrusted to me degenerate into presumption and a contempt for others, on whom Thou hast in thy impartial and all-comprehending love bestowed advantages and qualities in which I am failing.

Not pride, but a sense of noble elevation above the transient trifles of life, shall hold possession of me, and shall inspire me with a respect for that which has an eternal value, and which, if I possess, I shall one day appear before Thee without trembling. And should false self-love ever threaten to blind me to the truth, I will recall to mind the death of those whom I have loved best, and consider of how little avail in their last moments were all their earthly distinctions; I will remind myself of my own dissolution, and of what I shall then probably think of beauty, which will so soon be converted into dust and corruption; of riches which will pass to others; of fame, whose voice will be lost in the grave; of rank and power which will vanish like shadows with my last breath! Amen.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

The righteous man, how blest is he !
Thou art his God, his great reward ;
Oh, that my life might righteous be !
Thus ever present with the Lord :
So should I feel my anxious soul
Was drawing near perfection's goal.

Away self-pride and vanity,
'Neath which my frailties lie concealed ;
Unveiled before thy searching eye,
Faults, failures, all shall stand revealed.
What is more meet for man to learn
Than his own nature to discern ?

Who, who can tell how oft he fails ?
Thou, God, alone canst search me through,
For good thy strength alone avails ;
Oh take me, Lord ! my heart renew ;
Make me desire all pure to be,
From every hidden sin set free.

(2 COR. iii. 5.)

THE human soul is like light that illumines everything but itself. When the soul attains full consciousness, its knowledge may extend from the nearest objects to the most distant stars ; yet within itself all may remain so dark that no eye can penetrate its gloom.

Through the instrumentality of our senses, our soul takes cognizance of form and color, of articulate and inarticulate sounds, and of all other matters in the outer world ; but concerning itself it learns nothing except through its inward activity and its self-consciousness.

The spirit solves many a riddle on earth, but that which lies nearest to it, the mystery of its own being, it cannot penetrate.

This strange difficulty of self-knowledge extends even to our own bodies. We see all other things far oftener and far more distinctly than we behold ourselves. There are, indeed, many parts of our body that we never see. We are able without difficulty to picture to ourselves, even when they are absent, the appearance of persons with whom we are more or less familiar, but our own image we cannot bring before the mind's eye, however frequently we may have gazed at it in the mirror; at all events it dwells but vaguely and indistinctly in our memory.

This strange fact must have struck many. Why has the Creator thus ordained it? Does not the question naturally arise, "I know so many things, why myself least of all?"

That with which we are thoroughly acquainted, we cease to observe. But as we never behold ourselves except in a kind of misty twilight, our attention and our curiosity are constantly incited to seek to penetrate the obscurity. Thus every individual is made to feel that the noblest object of study which man can select is man himself.

But the spiritual, thinking, willing element within us, which we call the soul, cannot be observed through the senses. We learn to know its existence through its self-consciousness alone; or through its activity, its thoughts, wishes, desires, and feelings. Even the souls of other men we learn to know only through their activity. And as all human spirits are, by the highest Spirit, endowed with reason; as this reason in all acknowledges the same laws as to what is true,

right, and good ; we are by means of these laws enabled to judge as to whether one spirit is nobler, more perfect than another, according as its inward character is revealed in a higher or lower tone of mind, in nobler or less noble aims, words, and deeds.

It may be said with truth that the beginning and foundation of all earthly wisdom, as well as its highest object, is self-knowledge. Therefore "Learn to know thyself" was the fundamental doctrine of one of the noblest sages of heathen antiquity. Therefore the Holy Scriptures recommend the same means for attaining true wisdom when they say : "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves." (2 Cor. xiii. 5.)

Without intimate self-knowledge I am incapable of judging wherein consist my good tendencies and capacities, which it is my duty to use for higher purposes, as also what is the principal source of the various failings which prevent me from enjoying full satisfaction with myself and with things out of myself. How can I convince any one of error if I do not know what errors are peculiar to him ? Or how can I improve a thing the defects in which are unknown to me ?

The majority of men are, however, far too little familiar with themselves. In consequence, they are apt to mistake their defects for virtues, and also either to overestimate or to underrate their real good qualities and capacities. Therefore, also, they are seldom quite self-consistent, but contradict themselves both in words and deeds. They have no perfect self-dependence, but allow themselves to be carried away by the stream of circumstances ; they keep their eye on the haven towards which they are steering, but not on the ship in which they are borne along.

Yet he only who makes it his constant occupation to observe all the workings of his own mind, learns to know what is really valuable in human society. How should he learn to know this, who knows nothing of himself, or who is foolish enough to judge himself according to the inspirations of his self-love alone? It is no wonder if he believe that the world misjudges him, though in reality it judge him more correctly than he does himself. Thence arise constant collisions and misunderstandings; thence also constant dissensions and want of mutual love.

Many a man fancies that he is magnanimous to his enemies, and ready to forgive them, because he holds out the hand of peace; whereas it is but his cowardliness that makes him desire to be in friendly relations with those whom in his heart he really hates. Many a man believes himself chaste and moral, because he has not fallen in the same way as others; but he does not take into account the circumstances that have saved him from falling. It was perhaps not so much horror of sin that withheld him, as want of opportunity, or fear of the shame that might follow. Many persons, again, believe themselves to be benevolent and kind, and devoted to the common weal, because they feel pleasure in affording aid to all undertakings planned for the benefit of individuals, of the city in which they live, or of the whole country. But they fail to observe that in the depths of their hearts sits ambition directing all their actions, and that perhaps they have never done a kindness which they have not allowed to become known to one human being at least. It is a gratification to them to do good, but at the same time it is also a gratification to know that others are aware of it.

These self-delusions are the consequence of imperfect self-knowledge, — and how could he lay claim to being called wise who is ever apt to deceive himself more or less grossly?

What is my value in the human community? What part do I play in it? These questions which are so important to us, and in which even our self-love is interested, cannot be answered without long and close observation of all that passes daily in our own minds.

Not until we have become familiar with the most secret folds in our own hearts; not until we have learnt to discern the lower as well as the higher motives by which we are actuated on every given occasion; not until we have learnt narrowly to watch the varying feelings that determine our decisions, and dictate our utterances, can we acquire an unerring and trustworthy standard by which to measure other men.

Ah, let no one who has not closely scrutinized himself venture to pronounce judgment on the words and deeds of his fellow-men, for his judgment must infallibly be superficial, and founded on appearances only. If he have no clear knowledge of himself and of the source of his own feelings, how will he be able to divine the secret motives of other hearts? But he who has deeply studied himself, will, by the melancholy remembrance of his own weakness, learn to be lenient to the defects of his fellow-men, while at other times he may hesitate to join in the loud chorus of praise raised by the multitude. He knows but too well how little real merit there may be in actions which the world lauds, and how much indulgence and tender consideration may be due to many unhappy beings whom the world condemns, because tempting circumstances, hot blood, or the pressure of want, have led

them in passionate self-forgetfulness to commit a deed, the memory of which a whole life of repentance does not suffice to blot out. Through self-knowledge only can we attain true knowledge of human nature, and through this latter alone can we acquire power and influence over other men.

Everybody has some reason for wishing to obtain influence over the persons in the midst of whom he lives. Be this influence greater or less, it is in every case essential for our own happiness. For how should we be able to live without the aid and the sympathy of our fellow-men? How should we be able to carry out anything useful in the community, if we could not win over at least some few others to our views? A knowledge of human nature teaches us how to touch hearts, and how to overcome the obstacles which exist in the minds of our fellow-citizens, and which are apt secretly to obstruct our most noble undertakings.

Self-knowledge is of so much importance in regard to our entire life here below, and also in eternity, that to acquire it ought to be the chief task of every Christian who is anxious that his immortal soul should attain a high degree of perfection even here on earth. But how can it ever attain such perfection if he neglects the first step towards it; or how can he hope to reach the highest degree of perfection in the eternal kingdom of spirits, into which his soul shall pass at the moment of his earthly dissolution, if he have not the courage to seek to become in this life already, as good, as pure, and as great as his opportunities will admit of. It is true the beginning of all things is difficult, so also of self-examination. We shall, no doubt, often weary of it; often neglect it, in order not to touch some wound of the conscience which is

still smarting; often postpone it, because some contemptible passion within us is still craving to be satisfied. At all times, moreover, self-love will blind the mind's eye to its own deficiencies, and will throw a cloak over its weaknesses, and endeavor to conceal from view certain blemishes. For to attain self-knowledge we have first to wage war against our lower self; we must first impose silence on our ambition and our pride, on our covetousness and our tendency to voluptuousness, on our hatred and our anger, in order that the calm voice of reason may make itself heard.

Consider, before every important action in thy life, what thy conduct ought to be as a Christian and a rational being, and whither, on the other hand, thy sensual desires and thy feelings are impelling thee. Then decide quickly in favor of the right, of that which thy conscience approves, and subdue thy selfishness, however strenuously it may resist.

Reflect after each act, by which thou hast either benefited or injured another human being, why thou didst this, by what motives thou wert actuated. Search with unflinching eye for the secret causes, however cunningly they may have concealed themselves. If perchance thou hast acted not with deliberate forethought and calm mind, but hast been hurried on by various circumstances, without being allowed time for reflection, inquire, nevertheless, what were the feelings that agitated thee, and how they originated? Whether thou didst right to allow them to gain the ascendant at that moment? Whether thy precipitancy has not perhaps caused thee to sink in the estimation of those who until then held thee in the high esteem of which they thought thee deserving

because they had never before seen thee so weak? What is the reason why on this, as on so many other occasions, thou art discontented with what thou hast spoken? What is the true though secret cause of the impetuosity of which thou art often found guilty? Is it not thy latent vanity which is always breaking forth, sometimes even against thy will? Or is it perhaps thy wounded pride, which, however loudly thou mayst deny its existence, still holds thee in subjection? Or is it uneasy, ever-craving covetousness of which thou art the slave, and which overlays all thy good qualities?

If thou searchest thy heart with a sincere desire to know the truth, the real sources of thy various feelings will not remain hidden from thee; and if, when thou hast discovered them, thou findest them so impure, that for thine own honor's sake thou wouldst fain conceal them from the whole world, why dost thou not eradicate them at once, however much it may cost thee? What worth can that esteem have in thine eyes, which thou knowest within thyself thou dost not deserve, and which thou feelest persuaded would not be entertained for thee wert thou seen in thy true colors? Wouldst thou rather cover over a consuming cancer in thy body with gold and scarlet to conceal it from ignorant mortals, than seek to heal it? Art thou really more perfect because men honor thee? Nay, not so, for thou mayst know thyself guilty of acts and feelings which even deprive thee of thy self-respect; and the omniscient God thou canst not deceive, and He sees the blemishes of which thou refusest to purify thyself.

In the bustle of common life, time and inclination to meditate upon ourselves indeed often fail. The

day is devoted to work, business, and intercourse with others; and it is upon these that we are to bring to bear the principles which we have formed in quiet hours of contemplation.

But when at night we withdraw from the turmoil of the world, and, so to say, once more possess ourselves; when darkness spreads its wings over us, and everything around is hushed in silence and repose, and we are given over to ourselves and God alone, — God, whose might upholds us even in the darkness, and in whose hand lies our life and the health and existence of those we love! — then is the time for earnest self-examination. Nature seems to force us back into ourselves, and the events of the day that has just gone by pass voluntarily before the mind's eye, to allow themselves to be reviewed.

Then prove thyself as the Scriptures bid thee: if thou hast lived in faith, *i. e.* if thou hast throughout the day thought and acted with the propriety, nobility, dispassionateness, courtesy, and desire to serve others which thy Saviour Jesus and, through Him, thy God hath commanded thee. Begin with the question: "What action have I performed to-day, which will bear witness before the judgment-seat of the Omniscient of my willingness to do right? What faults were most active in me to-day, and caused me to be guilty of unjust deeds or unworthy feelings? Whence come these faults, and what can I do to conquer them, and to cherish the virtues that are the opposites of them?"

"Perhaps I have been passionate and violent during the day, and have hurt, without any adequate cause, the feelings of some acquaintance, or of some inmate of my home. Perhaps I did not reflect at the

time that the persons who offended me did so from thoughtlessness, and not with any malicious intention. Yet what a difference does this not make? At least they did not merit my treating them with so much harshness. Do I feel that I have done wrong? that I might have acted far otherwise?

“It is true, whispers self-love, ever ready with excuses, it is true; but, after all, it was very natural that I should act as I did, for I was out of temper, and when this is the case we do not weigh our words.

“But this excuse proves that I was aware that my mind was unhinged, and knowing this why did I allow my ill-humor to vent itself on an innocent object? I knew that I was depressed or discontented, why then did I not at once make a resolution not to allow myself to say a harsh word to any one while I was in that mood, but to remain silent, even should cause be given for anger? For it is well known that when angry, as when intoxicated, we see things, not as they really are, but in a perverted light.

“But perhaps it was not only that day, but habitually that I am prone to anger. Self-love whispers: It is a defect in the temperament, and faults belonging to our nature are not easily eradicated. But who knows whether it is really a defect of temperament, or, if so, whether it may not nevertheless be conquered by a resolute will? Have I made an attempt? I am always able to curb my irascibility when in the presence of high personages, or of strangers, or when surrounded by those whose esteem I am anxious to retain,—do not these instances, in which I am able to restrain my temper, convict me of error when I maintain that it is part of my nature, and cannot therefore be eradicated? If I am able to conquer it

at one time, why not at another? If a sudden diversion of feeling has proved in one instance to be an efficacious preventive of the outbursts of my passion, why do I not try the remedy each time my ill-humor threatens to get the better of me?"

Such is the way a Christian speaks to himself in quiet hours of self-examination. But even when most determined to silence the whisperings of self-love, when probing our own worthiness or unworthiness, and seeking to see ourselves in a true light, we rarely succeed in being quite impartial. Our judgment of ourselves will always in a great measure take a coloring from the mood of the moment. That which seems to us of very little importance when we are in a cheerful state of mind, appears to us in hours of dejection even more reprehensible than it really is.

For the acquirement of self-knowledge, it is therefore very useful to listen to the judgment of sincere and upright friends, and to ponder on what they may have to say as to our defects of mind or conduct. If they judge rightly, our conscience will not fail to tell us so, and the flattering testimony of self-love will be put to shame. Nay, even the judgments of those who are hostilely inclined towards us may be of the greatest use in enabling us to detect our foibles and our shortcomings. For an enemy will be more sharp-sighted as to our smallest defect than the best friend.

To acquire self-knowledge shall be the constant task of my life, for it is the mirror in which my soul beholds itself. It is the beacon that guides the spirit through the darkness of life! I will henceforward sit in judgment upon myself with deep earnestness, that I may be the more certain of rejoicing in the grace and mercy of the Lord my God. I thirst

after perfection. Thou, O my God, hast placed in my way the means of sanctifying and ennobling myself: how can I justify myself if I despise and neglect these means!

Oh, support me with thy might and strength, when, in accordance with thy holy commandment, I prove the worth of my own heart. The thought of thy will, and thy omniscience, will remind me each night of rendering an account to Thee and to myself, — an earnest account, such as it behooves me to make to the Omnipresent, before whom all deception is vain.

He who is in the habit of keeping such account with himself, each day diminishing the number of his debts, and each day increasing the number of his virtues: oh, he may in the last hour, when an account is to be rendered of his entire life, look up with a happy smile and child-like trust to Thee, O Heavenly Father. He will have done as much as in him lies. Be merciful unto him! Amen.

EQUANIMITY OF MIND.

Cheerfully calm, the Christian's life
Flows on — God dwells within his breast;
E'en in the midst of passion's strife,
He knows his goal, and is at rest.

Naught can his trusting spirit shake;
Joy's wildering draught can ne'er beguile;
Though his last anchor seem to break
In the storm's rage, he still can smile.

(PROV. xvi. 32.)

IT cannot be denied that we are ourselves the authors of the greater number of evils under which we suffer. If we are living in enmity with others, part of the blame generally attaches to ourselves. If we are laboring under secret sorrow, we may mostly accuse ourselves, with justice, of having been the cause of it: and yet we would all fain be happy!

How are we to explain the existence of this desire for happiness side by side with that unpardonable imprudence which is ever leading us to destroy with our own hands that which we have endeavored so carefully to build up? How is it that, though ever wishing to secure to ourselves a cheerful state of mind, we at the same moment do everything in our power to destroy our own peace, contentment, and joy? How is it possible to understand that man, though loving himself so devotedly, should nevertheless act towards himself with a cruelty from which even his bitterest enemy would recoil?

If I look into myself, and earnestly seek for the reason of these contradictions, I find that one of the principal sources of my discontent is the excessive liveliness of my feelings and the overwrought sensitiveness of my mind, to which at first I give myself up with a certain experience of pleasure, but which end by overmastering me, instead of remaining under my control.

To persons with acute feelings every pleasure does indeed come with double zest, but to them also sorrow comes with greater poignancy. He who gives himself entirely up to the emotions which arise in him on some given occasion generally converts his joys into sources of discontent, while, on the other hand, every mishap causes far more vexation than it ought reasonably to call forth.

It is true the amount of sensibility with which we are endowed does not depend upon ourselves, but is a gift of God, a quality of our minds which we have received from nature. We cannot make ourselves otherwise than we are ; but we can at all times retain the mastery over our feelings, and control even our most lively sentiments. And our highest duty, as well as mere worldly prudence, demands this of us.

Man cannot indeed prevent that which is joyful from affecting him pleasurable, but he can prevent himself from acting foolishly in his joy. It is equally true that man cannot always prevent sudden anger or indignation, or unutterable grief, from taking possession of his heart, but he can control himself so as not to speak or to act during the first outburst of his passion. Many persons who are otherwise by no means evil-minded do an immense deal of mischief, merely because they do not sufficiently control them-

selves, or perhaps even consider it meritorious to let themselves be entirely carried away by their feelings. A poor merit, indeed, which we share with every un-reasoning animal !

There are people, otherwise true, trustworthy, prudent, and reserved, who, when their hearts overflow with joy, so completely forget themselves and what they owe to others, that they divulge their own or other people's secrets with unpardonable thoughtlessness ; others do the same during paroxysms of anger. How many bitter hours, how many years of repentance have not such momentary imprudences caused !

It is still more common to see persons of over-sensitive disposition as much affected by some slight mischance as they might be by some real misfortune. Even insignificant circumstances excite their feelings in an extraordinary manner. A dream, a mere fancy, will suffice to depress their spirits for a whole day, and to render them incapable of any enjoyment. Such sensibility, though often a result of physical weakness, is as frequently the effect of a self-indulgent, ill-regulated, and morbid mind, which has never yet had the courage to make even an attempt to master its own feelings.

The evils that may be caused by such absence of self-restraint have been made manifest by a thousand sad experiences. It is well known that persons whose feelings are very excitable and who exercise no control over them are liable to become victims of the craft of others and to be led by them ; and that those who think themselves thoroughly independent because they give themselves up without restraint or reserve to all their caprices, are the weakest and most dependent on the unworthy characters that surround

them. It is well known that persons whose minds are disturbed by strong passions always act with less prudence and judgment than those who enjoy a more equable state of mind, and who never lose their self-possession. It is well known that when over-excitable people refuse to exercise the power which the soul has over the body and over the ebullition of the feelings, they at last become intolerable to themselves and insufferable to society, that they injure their health, and that they not only cut off the joys of life, but shorten life itself, and thus become as it were destroyers of themselves.

Even the ancients taught men that they ought to observe the golden medium in joy and in sorrow, that even as to sentiments intemperance is a vice. Indeed, all wise and virtuous men commend equanimity of mind, and Jesus Christ, the Divine Founder of our religion, set us throughout his earthly life a sublime example of a moderation which in the hours of joy never exceeded the limits of propriety and dignity, and of an equanimity which in the times of deepest grief was never shaken. Whether at the joyful wedding feast in Cana, or in the fearful hour of agony on the Cross, Jesus was always the same, always meek, calm, benevolent, anxious for the welfare of others, without exuberance in joy, without impatience or dejection in sorrow.

The want of self-possession under various circumstances, the absence of true Christian equanimity, is a great obstacle to peace of mind and to a pure and pious life, because it is a source of many faults and sins.

It is therefore the duty of every Christian, of every human being, indeed, who aspires to true wisdom,

and who would enjoy a happy and cheerful life, to endeavor to acquire evenness of mind.

For equanimity is that calm mood of the soul which enables it to act with perfect self-possession, and prevents us from ever giving way to exaggerated grief or joy. The soul of a person who possesses it is raised above every pleasure and every pain, holds these in check, and never allows itself to be overwhelmed by either.

A Christian ought always to be the same, that is to say, he ought always to be absolute master of himself. Only in so far can he vindicate for himself the sublime possession which his religion assigns to him among the creatures of God. By this it is not meant, however, that he is to be indifferent to, or unresponsive for, pleasure. No ; a pure heart may always be a cheerful heart, but he must never allow himself to be intoxicated by pleasure. Nor does it mean that a Christian ought to be impervious to suffering himself, and without sympathy for the sufferings of others. No ; he is human, he must therefore suffer, but he need not be conquered by the ills of life. Painful emotions may arise in him, but he will soon regain his composure. He is like a lofty rock : round its base the stormy waves of the ocean foam and break, its breast is wrapped in dark clouds, but its summit rises majestically into the bright sunlight and reflects the dancing beams.

Think not that the attainment of this sublime equanimity, this glorious, never-varying serenity of mind, is a task beyond thy powers. Think not that it is chiefly a matter of temperament, or dependent upon outward circumstances. Great is the power of circumstances, and great the influence of our sensuous

nature ; but mightier than both is the soul of the Christian, of the wise man.

Say not that thou art content to continue as thou art and that thou desirest no more happiness than thou actually enjoyest ; that thou needest not to do violence to thyself ; that others must just bear with thee as thou art ; and that if thy excessive sensibility and sensitiveness, and the exuberance of thy grief or thy joy should prove injurious to thee, it is thine own affair, and thou wilt know how to support it ! No ; this is a question that bears intimately not only on thy earthly happiness, but on thy health, the duration of thy life, thy Christianity, thy self-improvement, and even on thy eternal happiness !

It is true, an equable state of mind cannot be attained without a struggle, without self-subjugation ; but never-failing serenity of soul, this heavenly fruit of wisdom, this jewel of a pious Christian heart, is well worth even the severest struggle.

The first step towards the attainment of equanimity is constantly to keep a watch over ourselves, so as not to allow our feelings on any occasion whatsoever to get the better of us, and that, happen what may, we always remain calm and collected. He who has acquired this habit of self-watchfulness, and the firm will never to lose his self-possession, has already half won the victory ; and verily, man can do a great deal ; by firm determination and constant care he can effect a change in himself that is truly astonishing. The soul, which in ordinary men and women is made the slave of the body, may, by the exercise of its power, effect beneficial changes even in the natural tendencies and capacities of the physical being.

He who can govern himself is capable of governing

others also. A mind, the happy serenity of which can never be overclouded by any outward occurrence, is always better able to judge correctly the acts of others and the end to which things are leading. He who possesses such a mind deserves the name of sage, and his equanimity inspires respect, and often awakens admiration; on the contrary, a capricious mind, the balance of which is easily upset, is wavering in its judgments as well as its actions, contradicts itself, loses its self-respect, and, as a just and natural consequence, also the respect of others. It never sees the world in a true light, but sometimes in the flattering colors of its own imagination, at others enveloped in the dark mists of its own dejection.

Therefore learn to control thyself! Refrain from action as long as thy feelings are over-excited; speak not, or at least weigh well thy words before speaking, when joy or grief, fear or anger, threaten to overwhelm thee. He who retains a serene mind disarms even the most embittered enemy by the dignity and calmness of his demeanor, and as he runs no risk of exposing his weak points in his impetuosity, he has no fear of being wounded. A temperate man plucks the rose of joy with wise caution; the impetuous man plucks it without thinking of its thorns, and the smart of his wounds thus soon embitters the pleasure he sought to secure. Beware not to form resolutions in the heat of passion, nor plans during the intoxication of pleasure. With returning soberness comes repentance. Let not all the warnings received in life prove vain.

When thou discoverest a change coming over thy feelings, and perceivest the swell of indignation or of wrath rising in thy heart, or that melancholy is veil-

ing thy soul in darkness, or that thy joy is becoming uncontrollable, seek to divert thy mind! Go into some other place. The change in the surrounding objects will call forth new images, will awaken other thoughts and feelings; the balance of thy mind will be reëstablished, and thou wilt remain lord of thyself, and independent of the external things of the world, while thy inward contentment will continue undisturbed, and thou wilt have spared thyself a blush of shame and a pang of repentance.

But this equanimity, which is an object of desire to every Christian, to every truly wise man, must not be a mere outward semblance, must not only consist in the power exercised over the expression of thy countenance and over thy gestures: it must dwell in thy soul. Christian equanimity does not consist in the art of concealing our feelings in the presence of others; in the art of smiling while the heart is bursting with suppressed passion; nay, Christianity is something more than mere worldly wisdom, it is deep and soul-animating truth. The bright glance of the eye is not to be an effect of art, but the expression of a serene soul.

Indeed, what would such pretense avail thee? Thou mightst perhaps impose upon others, but in so doing thou wouldst deceive thyself even more. Thou wouldst cheat thyself of peace of mind, of health and purity of soul. Even thy very hope of being able to deceive others is a self-delusion, for they will soon discover thy artfulness when they perceive what contradiction there is between thy actions and thy apparent placidity; and the more cause there is for distrusting thy soft words and gentle looks, the more hated and despised thou wilt be. Shouldst thou ever

be guilty of an unjust act, the world will not fail to place thee in the rank of cold-hearted villains, of hypocritical sinners, or of untrustworthy flatterers.

Be pure, be truthful, be simple, and never appear before the world, nor before thyself, in a double character. Control not only thy words and thy gestures : be master of thine own heart ! If the acts of men seem revolting to thee, and thou feelest thy equanimity giving way, seek to divert thy thoughts. Recall to mind that men are not radically bad or malignant, but erring beings. They err from want of insight ; they err in their judgments of thee ; they err in regard to what they consider good and useful ; and they err in their choice of means to an end. Why, then, wilt thou give way to indignation at what is merely a fault of the understanding ? Had they more knowledge, had they been better trained in youth, both their judgments and their actions would have been different. They err also from weakness of character, because they have not strength of mind enough to control their sensual instincts. Thy anger, thy indignation, or thy dejection, can neither alter them nor the consequences of their acts. Be a man, then ! Collect thyself, and endeavor by some means or other to rectify or to modify the evil they have done. Try to remove from thy sphere of action any one who may be dangerous to thee by stirring up thy ire, or seek to avoid him.

If a dark mood come over thee, and thou art troubled with fears and anxieties, try to divert thy mind. Reflect that the victory is to the brave, and that the timid are already half defeated. Reflect that calm self-possession enables us to master all circumstances, whereas a dejected mind conjures up

mists and fancies that blind its sight. Reflect that just because thou art now depressed, more cheerful hours must be in store for thee. For such is the decree of an All-ruling Providence, which has ordained the eternal mutation of things, that every sorrow, every disagreeable event, is the forerunner of some joy or some happy occurrence.

But endeavor in like manner to possess thyself in gladness, and never in the intoxication of pleasure forget thy higher being. Enjoy with moderation. Remember in the midst of thy happiness that deep shadows may soon obscure the light, — that laughter may soon be followed by tears! Never allow thyself to be enervated by prosperity, and thou wilt bear with the greater courage the vexations which thou mayst have to encounter within the next few days.

He who possesses this truly Christian strength of soul, who walks through life armed with this equanimity of mind, will always observe the golden mean, and will neither be dazzled by the happiness which he possesses, nor morbidly pine for that which he cannot obtain; and will hold light the evils with which he is threatened, and rise calmly above those which have already befallen him. He walks before God, — he walks in the footsteps of Jesus, — and he passes through the checkered sunshine and shade of this life with unalterable serenity and cheerfulness. He gives and receives love; he dispenses joy and he reaps joy. He soon forgets what has given him pain, but nobly remembers what has done him good.

ANXIETY ABOUT THE FUTURE.

O weary soul, ascend to God,
Before his throne lay down thy load :
He knows thy pain : lay bare each smart,
Still trusting in a Father's heart.

Grief, fear of future care, away !
Beyond my night shines morning's ray,
When free from tears mine eyes shall see
Him whom I trust — my Saviour — Thee !

Must I long years my yoke still bear ?
No ; even then I'll not despair,
No earthly pain endures forever ;
God's mercy only endeth never.

(HEBREWS xiii. 5.)

WHAT will become of me in the future ? How many days of trouble and sorrow are still in store for me ? Will my anxieties never cease, my cares never come to an end ? Must my life be a constant struggle, and shall I never be able to look forward with hope, like my fellow-men ? Why am I doomed to so much suffering ; why is it my fate, that no sooner have I extricated myself from one misfortune than I sink into another ? O my God, hast Thou abandoned me ? Hast Thou no joys in store for me ? Are my most ardent wishes never to be fulfilled ?

Such are the lamentations sighed forth by those who, sunk in misfortune, gaze out upon the dark future with tearful eyes. Such are the complaints which rise from my troubled soul when depressed by many

cares. It longs for rest. It yearns for the sweet peace which is the reward of uprightness and fidelity to duty, of useful activity and pleasant intercourse with fellow-beings. But my future is dark and gloomy. I hope for light, but none appears. Alas! so many misfortunes may befall me, that no human wisdom can forestall, no human power avert. And I may succumb under these.

I do not ask for riches or superfluity, but only to be free from pressing cares: only to have some security for the future, only to be able to provide for those who belong to me. In vain has been the good that I have endeavored to do to all around me. My acts of kindness seem forgotten. No one remembers me. No one holds out to me the helping hand of brotherhood. Every one is engaged with his own pleasures, while I have to struggle painfully for the merest necessities, and, alas! the most depressing of all is, that I see no end to these secret sufferings, which I venture to confide to God only.

I ponder on the means of escape from my difficulties, but I know not where to find them. I seek with dimmed eyes a path which may lead out of them, but there is no one to point it out to me. I have no friend, nay, not one, who lives for me, who could or would help, not one who would care to fulfill the wishes of my heart. I dare not ask assistance from others, for I could never return or reward the services received. I do not venture to lay open to any one the secret and bleeding wounds of my heart, or to disclose the wretchedness which I conceal from the world under a forced smile. Indeed, I should gain little by so doing, and perhaps lose many acquaintances, who still cling to me, because my misery is

unknown to them. For such are men ; they promise love, friendship, fidelity, as long as they have anything to hope for in return. They are most zealous in rendering services, as long as they think they may be served in like manner. To the rich they give largely in brilliant festivities, and in other ways, but to the unfortunate they are hardly willing even to tender alms.

Ah, I should bear my fate courageously could I but know that in a year, or in any given time, it would be improved ; did I but know that some small portion only of my wishes in regard to myself and to those dear to me would be fulfilled. But who can unveil the mysteries of the coming days ? The past has become to me a dark abyss ; the present, a barren waste ; and the future, a starless night, all darkness and gloom.

I stand alone, abandoned by all. From others I can expect no help. I am thrown entirely upon my own weak powers. There is no one who can bring me comfort and peace, for there is no one who can penetrate the secret of future events. Alas, who can be poorer on earth than he who lacks even hope in a better state of things, and who can find no consolation !

But stay ! So poor thou art not yet, my heart. So poor no Christian can ever be. Why dost thou despair ? There is one comforter who holds out the hand of kindness, there is one comforter who will shed light through the darkness that surrounds thee, and who will kindle anew the star of hope. This comforter is RELIGION.

Yes, the religion of Jesus, and none other, assuages the mental sufferings of us poor mortals, enabling us

to meet with armed breast the threatenings of fate. It lights up the dark path of life with the torch of wisdom, and quickens our trust, makes our faith mighty to bear and resist, and our power truly strong.

In the depths of my woe I hear a holy voice sounding from afar. With wonderfully refreshing power it penetrates through my heart, and my spirit, endowed with new life, rises up to meet it. I hear a Divine voice calling to my soul, — a voice that has sounded through all time to the entire race of man. It is the voice of God, which saith, “I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee!” (Hebrews xiii. 5.)

Oh, sweet comfort of faith, sweet balm of religion, that heals the bleeding wounds, that wipes the tears from the weeping eyes, that silences all complainings! Though all men leave me, God will not leave me! And though the earth may forsake me, Heaven will not forsake me. I stand alone, yet not unsupported; I have revealed my secret sufferings to no one, yet there is One who knows them. No man has seen the tears which I have shed in the solitude of night, no man has heard the sighs which my misery has forced from my oppressed bosom, and yet these tears and these sighs have been numbered.

Take courage for the future! Commend thy ways to the Lord, and trust in Him! He will take care of thee!

Be of good cheer! Honor the wisdom of God, honor the ways of Providence, which thou canst not change, and which work out the well-being of the world, and the welfare of individual men, however much they may themselves strive against it. Why dost thou despond? Hast thou not the promise of God, the word of the Immutable, that He will not leave thee? He will not forsake thee!

Thou art full of anxiety as to the future. Thou fearest lest worse things even should be in store for thee than those which have already befallen thee. Thou art afraid that all the happiness thou art destined to enjoy may already have come to an end, and that the rest of thy days may be one chain of misfortunes extending to thy grave. O man of little faith ! Who is it then that hath promised that He will never leave thee, that He will never forsake thee ?

Thou wouldst fain know the future, know whether this one of thy wishes or that will be fulfilled ? Well, then, I will reveal to thee in general what will be thy fate in the future. Instead of straining thine eyes to penetrate into the depths of the time to come, turn them back upon the past and upon thy life during that period ; for know, the past is the mirror of the future.

That which thou hast already experienced thou wilt again experience, though under different circumstances and conditions. Wert thou ever in days past unceasingly miserable and unhappy ? No, nor wilt thou be so now, or in future. Pleasures are in store for thee, even where thou foreseest naught but pain and trouble. A rose will bloom for thee here and there in days to come, where now thou canst see nothing but thorns. Say not : But time flies, my days go by, I am growing older. For if time flies, thy moments of suffering pass away with it ; nothing remains or can remain exactly as it is ; but each year, each age, has its own peculiar advantages and enjoyments. Many a happy moment, many a small reward of industry, many a compensation for trouble and vexation, which thou hast never anticipated, will still be thine. Life passes away, it is true ; but not so God's providence,

and this watches over thee, and will not leave thee, will not forsake thee.

The past is the mirror of the future. The same God who has hitherto guided thee through so many events will be with thee henceforth also, and will be thy support. Thou art perhaps at this moment in a precarious position. Difficulties beset thee on all sides. Thy brightest prospects have been overclouded, and thy best hopes have been disappointed. But remember what has happened before; canst thou not recall to mind how often thou wert sunk in despondency? Canst thou no longer recollect how at times thou wert completely dissolved in grief? How entirely thou hadst given up all hopes of better things? Hast thou forgotten days which thou wouldst fain have converted into long nights, that thou mightst sleep away the consciousness of thy misery? But these have gone by; thou hast been very happy since then, hast enjoyed many pleasant hours, and canst now smile at thy former despondency. Well, then, take courage for the future also. A time will come when thou wilt almost have forgotten thy present difficulties, and thou wilt look back with shame at the discouragement and depression under which thou art now laboring.

How often didst thou not think that no one could save thee, that no one could help thee. And a few days or weeks went by; the invisible hand of Providence ruled over thee the while, circumstances altered imperceptibly, benefactors known to thee, or perhaps philanthropists never before heard of by thee came forward to assist thee, because God had touched their hearts; persons of whom thou hadst never thought became thy friends; proposals were made to thee

which thou wouldst never have dreamt of thyself, and which thou couldst never have expected; various little events, quite unlooked-for, drew thee out of thy painful position, and it was as if the sun came out slowly from the dispersing clouds, which until then had shed gloom around thee. See, God had not left thee, nor forsaken thee. He is faithful beyond all others, and his promises never fail. He who has been so kind to thee in the past will be equally so to thy dear ones in the future. He will be so to the whole human race, and to every individual child of man, in thousands of years to come as in the present day.

The unfortunate are naturally superstitious. All ordinary means of extricating themselves from their difficulties seeming closed to them, they would fain penetrate into the realm of the unknown by the help of magic, and extort its secrets from the silent future. They are not ashamed of making the most irrational attempts to accomplish this object, though their reason cannot fail to reprove them. They have recourse to fortune-telling; they endeavor to extract knowledge from the accidental play of things which have no connection whatsoever with their life and fortunes. They consult all kinds of signs, and draw thence conclusions as to the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of their wishes. They delude themselves, frequently even consciously, and corrupt their hearts and their understandings by their folly.

Never degrade thyself by a belief in fortune-telling and the interpretation of signs. When thou lovest thy faith in God's wisdom and his fatherly love, thou lovest thyself. Reason protests against thy giving thyself up to self-delusion in this contemptible way; for the false hopes which are grounded on

these supposed prognostics of what is to come to pass frequently lead to mistaken and foolish acts, which, instead of securing happiness, on the contrary, destroy all hope of it. The word of God seriously forbids all irrational endeavors to look into the future ; and the will of the Almighty cannot be set aside by such futilities, nor his laws be broken. And it is the will of God, and the divine law of the world, that the future shall be hidden from the sight of man. God has so ordained it with loving-kindness, that we may, trusting in Him, and without thought of the trials that may be in store for us, accept and enjoy the present moment, and that, leaving all else to Him, we may hold fast by his invisible hand, which will lead us through the darkness. "Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow," saith Jesus, with benevolent wisdom ; "Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." (Matt. vi. 34.)

Anxiety about the future cannot be relieved by such superstitious delusions as I have alluded to, but only by faith in the All-ruling hand of Providence, which ordaineth all things for the best ; and by thine own prudent endeavors to remedy or diminish the evils under which thou art suffering. Put thy shoulder to the wheel, and help to promote thine own well-being.

First, reflect maturely in solitude on the present state of thy circumstances. But let it be when thou art capable of seeking out and examining with perfect calmness all the sources of thy misfortunes.

Thou wilt then find, either that thou hast brought them on thyself by imprudence, by some fault, or by thy passionate temperament, or else that they have

been caused by circumstances over which thou hadst no control whatever.

If thou findest that thou art not thyself to blame, then there is so much the less reason to despair of being able to improve thy condition, for thou art then suffering innocently, and God is the friend and protector of the innocent. What thou lovest on one side He will give thee compensation for on the other side. For every pang that thou sufferest here, a joy will be held in store for thee elsewhere. Even thy losses, thy afflictions, will, if thou usest them with true wisdom, prove to be no real loss, no real calamity. It is only thy want of courage and thy self-will that convert them into such. They ought to be no more than an exercise for thy greatness of soul, and a test of thy faith. Gold is purified in the fire. The strength of virtue is tested in the storms of life. Nobility of mind can never be revealed in its full purity and glory, until all supports fail, and the mind has nothing to uphold it but its own strength. Perhaps long repose and happiness have enervated thee. Now the time has come when matters do not proceed according to thy wishes. Instead of weeping and lamenting like a spoilt and self-willed child, or obstinately persisting in the course which circumstances condemn, rise up like a man, and with calm wisdom order everything for the best. Thou hast lost nothing as long as thou hast not lost thyself; thou art not forsaken as long as faith in the support of God has not abandoned thee.

If thou hast been impoverished, or thy worldly prospects are threatened with ruin, and thou foreseest straitened circumstances for thyself and thy dear ones in the future, there is one means by which thou

mayst suddenly again acquire competence: learn to bear privations with manly fortitude. Be proud of this poverty, in respect to which no blame can be attached to thee. A well-stored and noble mind can afford to laugh at such accidental revolutions of fortune. Do thy best for thee and thine, and God will work with thee! He will not leave thee, neither will He forsake thee. Renounce the proud wishes and extensive plans in which thou hast hitherto indulged. It is not money, but his own heart, that makes a man rich. It is not poverty, but only crime, that entails shame.

If thou hast lost friends, and those even dearer than friends,—if thou hast been deceived and betrayed by men,—if thou art surrounded by envy and calumny,—thou hast only lost what could not remain thine forever; wherefore, then, pine for that which even thine own reason refuses to grant thee? As for those that have treacherously deceived thee, be proud that thou hast no share in their infamy; in the midst of thy misfortunes thou must be an object of respect to them, in so far as thou hast acted more nobly than they. That the envious envy thee, why should that distress thee? — Wasps ever swarm round the best fruit; let that in thee which awakens envy be thy consolation when thou art offended by evil-minded persons.

But if thou art the author of thine own misfortunes, against whom dost thou raise complaints? Why dost thou rest contented with lamenting? Why dost thou sigh forth, "What is to become of me?" Thou seest what has become of thee, and what is further to befall thee is in the hand of God. The evils that are now weighing upon thee are the punishment

of thine own follies and sins. Do not augment thy guilt by injurious despondency.

Thou hast fallen; well, then, make speed to rise again, and be sure that the hands with which thou hast destroyed thy happiness can build it up again. Let true Christian uprightness be thy support, and the teachings of Jesus be thy guide. Thy sins have brought the curse upon thee; Christian magnanimity and Christian wisdom will bring the blessing back into thy house. If thou hast but the courage to be happy, thou wilt not fail to be so. Turn towards the grace of God, and it will again shine upon thee. Follow the footsteps of Jesus, and thou wilt have entered the path of that peace and contentment of mind which are independent of all outward things; thou wilt have chosen the better part! Thou wilt again belong to God, and He will not leave thee, neither will He forsake thee.

Well, then, my soul, take courage! Be without fear for the coming days, God will count them out to thee. Arm thyself against every ill-fortune that may assail thee, with the courage and resignation of Christ. Let not thy magnanimity be overwhelmed, whatever may be the misfortunes that befall thee, and thou wilt have saved everything; learn to bear privation, and poverty will be unknown to thee; renounce thy ambitious and self-willed desires as idle fancies, and thou wilt have nothing to fear but everything to hope from the future.

I am comforted, I feel at rest in Thee, O my God. I will resolutely encounter my fate; I will await with unflinching courage whatever may befall me, for Thou, O Father, who ordaineth everything for the best, Thou, O my Maker, Thou wilt not leave

me, Thou wilt not forsake me. Resigned to thy will, I renounce without a murmur all that I have lost, I renounce my wishes for the future, and my ambitious projects ; for I know that that cannot be good for me which Thou, the All-wise, withholdest from me. I will rely on thy help, without fear or anxiety for myself or for those who belong to me ; I will trust to thy inclining towards me the hearts of those that surround me, or to thy turning wonderfully in my favor the circumstances that now threaten to crush me. My God, I know thy fatherly love, I have experienced it. How often in bygone times has not one moment sufficed to disperse the gloom that surrounded me ?

I pray not for happiness, but for strength and courage, and that thy Holy Spirit may never forsake me, and that the example of Jesus may ever be before me ! I will deny myself, as He denied Himself ; I will drain my bitter cup of sorrow with the same holy resignation in thy will, O Father, as He drained his, and I shall triumph over the ills of these days as He gloriously triumphed over evil, and I shall feel, even in the midst of my tears and sufferings, as Jesus felt in his agony, that Thou art the All-merciful and the Ever-faithful God, that Thou wilt not leave me, and wilt not forsake me. Father, who art in heaven, my soul places its hope in Thee ! Amen.

UNMERITED SUFFERING.

He, the Wise, the Everlasting,
Giveth heed,
Knows each need,
As through the world I'm hasting.
Shall my Saviour e'er forget me?
His the will
I fulfill,
My measure He hath set me.

Birds that through the air are flitting,
Beasts that rove,
'T is his love,
Finds food and pasture fitting.
Gives He not each lovely flower
Colors bright,
By the might
Of his grace and power?

Shall He, me alone forsaking,
Leave to bear,
All my care,
His presence from me taking?
His I am in faith revering;
Fatherly
Loves He me.
I'll trust his love, unfearing.

(HEBREWS xii. 11.)

SHALL not the heart of man grieve, when it is made to suffer without hope, when it is doomed to lose all that has become dear to it through long possession, all that has rendered life sweet? Who can command his eyes not to weep in bitter sorrow? Who can stay the bleeding of a fresh wound? In vain is the consolation ye may offer to the sufferers,

ye happy ones. Ye can give naught but words. Ye have the sympathetic understanding, but they, the deeply oppressed, have the bleeding heart. Alas! give them not words, but give them back the happiness they have lost, and then perhaps they will thank you, for then you will have given true comfort.

Has not God himself bestowed upon us all an equal right to the enjoyment of the few pleasures which life affords? Why then are thousands of men happy, while I alone among these thousands have my heart filled with grief and care? The sight of what ye possess, ye fortunate ones, only adds to my regret for that which I have lost. Or have I deserved to be less favored than you, than thousands of others? Have I been more vicious, am I more guilty than thousands of those that surround me? Has not God himself planted in my bosom a heart susceptible of every joy? Why should He have made me thus susceptible for that which after all was destined to make me miserable? Why should I be made to cling with love to that which is to be painfully wrested from me? Why have I this sense of all that is good and beautiful, if it is to be converted into a new source of suffering? Would it not be better for me were I unfeeling as a rock? I should, indeed, have fewer joys, but I should not miss them, as they would be unknown to me; and I should, on the other hand, be spared all suffering.

Is not the desire for enjoyment the first that is awakened in the infant? And the desire grows and ripens with the ripening years of the child. It is present in its full development far sooner than understanding, experience, and reflection. Enjoyment becomes a necessity to man, and when it has become so,

you demand of him that he should renounce it. Why should I be so cruelly deprived of that for which the Creator has given me an instinctive craving?

You would fain comfort the sorrowful. They know all that you would say, but your reasonings do not satisfy them. If they have lost their happiness by their own fault, well then, they must settle matters with themselves, and they must reproach themselves alone. But how is it with those who, without any fault of their own, have suffered shipwreck of everything that constituted the happiness of their lives? With those whose domestic peace has been destroyed by heartless villains? Whose material prosperity has been blighted by the calamities of war, which has reduced them to beggary, and made them, besides, widows and orphans, or who have been deprived of their social position and the means of subsistence by some sudden revolution? Who have lost by the hand of death those to whom they clung with fondest affection? Who have been robbed of the esteem of their fellow-citizens and their daily companions, by the evil tongues of base slanderers? Who are crushed under the weight of events which no mortal could foresee?

Hold! O wretched sufferer! Thy sorrow may be great and legitimate, but not so thy lamentations. Pain, like pleasure, is a fruit of the earthly part of thy being, but the view thou takest of it ought to be the fruit of thy elevated spirit. Thou canst not prevent thy tears from flowing or thy wounds from bleeding; but thou mayst prevent thy spirit from becoming unworthy of itself, and from sinking under the burden. The strength of a wise mind consists herein, that it first reflects that what has taken place

cannot be altered, — that God wills it so ; and next, that from the great misfortune a much greater good may be drawn ; for Providence has not ordained that which has taken place without a purpose.

But if thou art so entirely absorbed in thy earthly, half-animal being, that thou canst not, like a divine man, soar up to higher sentiments, then thou deservest to be overwhelmed by thy misery like the animals, which cannot by greatness of soul rise above the pains that afflict them. Thou choosest to make thyself even more miserable than thou art through the outward misfortunes that have fallen upon thee ; for thou deprivest thyself of the power to derive from misfortune that higher and lasting happiness, which may be drawn from it, like the sweet kernel from the bitter shell. “ No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous : nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” (Heb. xii. 11.)

He who refuses to be comforted unless his lost happiness be restored to him in its old form, thereby intimates that he considers that his own wisdom exceeds that of Divine Providence ; for the wisdom of Providence took away from him that which he possessed, in order that in the calamitous hour which saw the wreck of all his earthly happiness he might be led from this life up into a higher state of being ; it was the wisdom of Providence that was teaching him in that dread hour what is man and all that belongs to him, in order that he might be drawn nearer to God and to all that is divine. It was the wisdom of Providence that showed him that happiness and unhappiness, and the whole play of earthly life, is but a

dream given to train the soul, and which showed him this in order to lift him up to a higher stand-point, whence he might be better able to judge of the nothingness of everything under the sun, and that he might be induced to devote his spirit to that which is imperishable like itself.

Every creature on earth has been endowed by God with the right to joy or happiness; He has given it to the tiniest insect, whose life scarce endures from sunrise to sunset. And to all those to whom He gave the right He has also given the power of enjoyment. But Divine Wisdom ordained that light should be accompanied by shadow, and that each joy should have its corresponding pain, in order that mortal man might ever be reminded that the transient pleasures of life ought not to be his highest object, because there is something higher still. But light and shade, joy and pain, have been partitioned among men with the most wonderful exactness and impartiality, so that each mortal should receive an equal share. It is, therefore, difficult to say who is the happier or the less happy. He who is most sensitive to joy, at the same time feels sorrow the more keenly. What appears of great value to one person, and throws him into ecstasies of delight, is a matter of complete indifference to another. Therefore we are liable to err greatly if we judge of the felicity of men by their outward circumstances only. That for which one man envies another is perhaps to him that possesses it a real burden, the source of all his sufferings.

The true sage, the true Christian, however, must enjoy a higher amount of inward happiness than others. But this happiness is the result not so much of the outward goods that he possesses, as of the cor-

rect estimate which he forms of them, and of his never allowing them to be the foundation of his contentment. Persons whose natural bluntness of feeling prevents them from being very painfully affected by misfortune, have indeed so far an advantage over those who are more keenly sensitive, and who are almost driven to despair when calamities befall them. But this advantage is again counterbalanced by the fact that the less impressionable minds are less susceptible of happiness. Therefore the more deeply depressed thou mayst feel, with the greater certainty mayst thou look forward to being raised up again by the hand of Providence. The more heart-rending thy sorrow, the more intense will be thy joy.

God has endowed thee with a more susceptible heart, not only that thou mayst enjoy the pleasures of life the more fully, but also that thou mayst feel the pains of existence the more keenly, and that thy spirit may thereby receive a stronger impulse to soar upwards. He who has a less excitable temperament is able to act with greater prudence and self-possession, whether it be in joy or sorrow. He who is carried away by the vivacity of his feelings requires greater power to enable him to rise above them; but when he accomplishes this, then also he enjoys true happiness in fuller draughts.

Undoubtedly the desire for enjoyment and well-being is innate in the child, and it grows and ripens with his growth, and the striving after happiness becomes a necessity of man's life. Thou askest: Why should we learn to renounce without a pang that which the Creator has taught us to love? But does He not also teach the babe in the cradle to renounce what it likes best? Has the child not his tears as

the old man has his? Is not the longest life as well as the shortest, from the cradle to the grave, one unceasing lesson in the eternal truth, — that on earth no pleasure, as no pain, is enduring; that our path lies between the two, in order that we may learn by their constant changes to hold both equally light; that, by perceiving that neither can afford us true satisfaction, we may be led to the conviction that our spirits must be born for a far higher purpose than to be the toys of the varying play of earthly accidents, and that true happiness must consist in far more noble enjoyments than such as our earthly career affords? But where shall we seek for these higher enjoyments, for that unalterable cheerfulness and tranquillity of mind, if they are not to be derived from the circumstances amid which our lot is cast? We must learn to find them in ourselves, in our religious relations to the universe, to the world of spirits, to life here and in eternity, to Christ, and to our Father in heaven. We must find them in our conviction of the unutterable wisdom and goodness of God, who governs all things; we must find them in the strict fulfillment of all our duties in life, in the exercise of every virtue of which man is capable. The sublime self-consciousness of virtue and innocence is the only source of true and pure and lasting happiness.

It is, therefore, a great mistake to suppose that it is easier to find consolation for sufferings brought on by our own fault than for such as we have not merited. Know that there is no more dreadful evil on earth than that which forces man to turn against himself with hatred and contempt.

He whose loved ones are snatched from him by the

hand of death, or whose worldly prospects are injured by war, or by the slackness of business, or who is deprived of the world's esteem by the machinations of some malignant fellow-being, — he has lost much, but his self-respect he retains, and with this a feeling of holy pride in not having merited his adverse fate. He is refreshed by the tear of pity shed for him by strangers, for though it brings no help, he recognizes therein the love of others. His poverty, his abandonment, becomes to him a triumph as it were, and the more so, the less he has contributed to his misfortunes by any fault or imprudence of his own. He says to himself, with inward calm: "It is the will of God." "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." The outer man may bend under the weight of his misfortunes, but the inner man will only rise up stronger and nobler than ever, for he will at last have ceased to tremble at fate, he will have learnt to realize that God is with him.

In common life we generally feel more tender pity for those who are suffering without any fault of their own, and less for those who have brought down misfortunes upon themselves. And the cause is a very natural one. In the one case our pity is mixed with love, in the other with contempt and reproaches. Our judgments generally take a judicial form, and pronounce suffering merited when it seems to us to be the just punishment of some great mistake or some evil action; whereas we are deeply pained at the sufferings of those who, if fortune or misfortune were really always meted out as reward or punishment, would have merited a better fate. But if our pity

varied in proportion to the real misery of our fellow-beings, we should certainly pity those the most who are suffering by their own fault. They must always be the truly unhappy ones.

For in addition to their outward sufferings, they are tortured by an inward pain, the pang of an evil conscience, which the innocent can never know. Those who are the cause of their own misery have lost, as regards the outward world, what they much cherished; but not this alone, — with a clear conscience they could easily bear that, — they have lost their inward worth, their better selves as it were, and no pain can exceed this. They cannot look upon their sufferings as a triumph, but must regard them as the punishment of their own unworthiness; they cannot rise magnanimously above their trials, but can only impudently and shamelessly feign contempt for them. This forced indifference, however, adds to their misery. In every fellow-man, whom they have reason to suppose is acquainted with their condition, they behold a judge, who pronounces that which is crushing them to the earth to be a righteous judgment upon them; and even the pity of their fellow-beings brings no consolation with it, for an inward voice is always repeating, I have deserved my fate, I might have been happier had I been more worthy. Even the kindness of heart evinced in the sympathy of their friends frequently gives additional poignancy to their grief, because it reminds them of how much better the friends are than themselves, or they feel that the pity shown is not so much due to their outward misfortunes as to the mistakes of their heart and their understanding.

Therefore, rise up, O suffering and dejected soul ;

let it be thy pride that thy misfortunes are not the fruits of thy own transgressions. Thy misery is God's doing; thou couldst do naught to ward it off. Therefore take courage, for in good time God will again relieve thee of thy burden. He is mighty to help, and He will cause a blessing to spring from that which thou now deemest an inexhaustible source of sorrow.

He will not leave thee, nor forsake thee. That which is truly good He has never withdrawn from thee. But take heed that thou dost not leave God, that thou dost not forsake Him! Cling to Him, and He will hold thee up with his strong arm. Attach no undue importance to the earthly things that thou hast lost, and thou wilt perceive how much of inward happiness still remains to thee. The dreadful day of thy misfortune was meant to be the commencement of thy inward glorification. For the earthly and transient things to which thou didst cling too fondly were stripped from thee in order to prove how little enduring are all things here below. In like manner thy earthly covering will be stripped from thee on the day of thy death, that thy glorification may be complete. But begin this glorification now already, that the angel of death may find something to complete. Sanctify thy heart with honesty, truth, courage, love of thy fellow-men, and with every heavenly virtue. Throw off the faults that hinder thy growth in goodness; become a child of God, and no evil can touch thee, for the Almighty, the Lord of heaven and earth, will be thy Father.

He is thy Father even now, and for all the earthly goods that thou hast lost He will give thy immortal spirit heavenly compensation. What are the suffer-

ings of this short life, compared to the glories He has prepared for us in a higher existence? Thou wilt not, indeed, find there the earthly happiness which thou hast lost here, but new riches of his grace ; and the souls which thou didst love here on earth, oh, they are immortal, like thyself ; they will rejoin thee in heaven, with undiminished love. Everything that we possess on earth is lost to us in death, except the spirits whom we loved ; those we shall find again where dwells the Lord of spirits. Amen.

GOD IS MY COMFORTER.

To all my pain and grief,
Thou, Lord, canst make an end;
When hopeless of relief,
Thou canst salvation send.

If sorrows overflow,
Still let thy will, alone,
In joy alike, or woe,
In life or death, be done.

As each new morn appears,
Still may it witness be,
That, forced from crushing cares,
I trust alone in Thee.

(ISAIAH liv. 7, 8.)

LIFE is full of trouble and sorrow. Where is the mortal who can say with truth, "I am exempt from the suffering and tears which are the lot of other men?" Though we may see individuals who are surrounded by abundance, who are glowing with health, who seem to succeed in everything they undertake, whose eyes are ever sparkling with merriment, and who have always a joke upon their lips, do we know what cares may be brooding in the depths of their minds? Outward gayety is often but a veil spread over hidden wounds. Who knows what worm may be gnawing at their heart's core?

There are families in regard to whom one is inclined to assert, on first knowledge, that there is nothing left for them to wish for. They have all that they want, and they are rich in all the things

that thousands of others stand in need of ; but nearer acquaintance, and deeper insight into those circumstances of their lives which they conceal from the vulgar gaze, prove that things are very different from what they seem. In reality, these people are frequently far more unhappy than their neighbors, to whom they are objects of envy. Nay, there are cases in which the happiness apparent on the surface is, in fact, a secret source of many evils.

This is probably the reason that has led numbers of people to believe that life on earth has been destined by God to be to us a life full of tribulation, and has induced them to call the interval between the cradle and the grave a time of hard trial, and the earth itself a valley of tears. But they are greatly mistaken. How, indeed, is it possible to believe that the God of infinite mercy and love has created valleys of tears in his universe ? — that He has called beings into existence in order to torture them ? Even the most hard-hearted mortal would shrink from such an act, and they dare to attribute such cruelty to the All-holy and All-perfect Being !

It is the same feeling, perhaps, that has induced others to stand up and vindicate the ways of God, in respect to the evils existing in the world. Even pious Christian scholars have undertaken such justifications of God in deep earnest. Alas that the creature should deem it necessary to justify the Creator !

Indeed, every cause of consolation presented to the understanding during times of affliction proves of no avail if we have not the most entire and the most hearty trust in God ; for, whatever people may teach or preach, misfortune remains misfortune, and grief remains grief, and the sufferings of the heart cannot

be healed by the convictions of the understanding. But this I know: trust in our Father in heaven lightens the weight of every burden, it strengthens the mind and relieves it of all fear, and disarms the unknown events of the future of all their terrors. He who has real trust in God does not pray: "Father, listen to my wishes! Save for me that which I am threatened with losing," or, "Give back to me that which I have already lost." Nay, he prays as Christ prayed in the hour of his agony, — "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." (Luke xxii. 42.)

When I think of the infinite majesty of the Lord, who animates thousands and thousands of worlds peopled by myriads of beings created by Him, and who has upheld these from all eternity, so that no sun and no planet can move from its appointed orbit; when I think how unfathomable is that wisdom which has fashioned the blade of grass and ordered all its inward and outward parts, and which has also fashioned the countless host of stars which is marshalled in the heavens; when I think of the infinite goodness which He evinces towards all his creatures without exception, in all parts of the world, as in the ocean and in the heavens, — then I feel that I alone cannot have been forgotten. How can I believe that He who provides for all will fail to provide for me? Should I be able to breathe, should I be still in the world, if for one moment only He ceased to uphold me? Nay, even in mine hour of agony, He does not forsake me, He is with me, He the Invisible, All-ruling, All-gracious God! He loves me.

This conviction, this comfort of which nothing can deprive me, comes home to me whenever I think of

Him. In face of this, every doubt is silenced, which the imagination, the ill-temper, or the impatience of mortals may raise. He loves me! I know it! He loves me as He loves his entire universe. I know it, and I should know it, even had parents and teachers never told me of his love, — even if the entire universe were reduced to silence. Who, then, has told me of it? My own life tells me of it, and would tell me of it were all other witnesses dumb. Therefore, be of good cheer, my soul!

“For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.” (Isaiah liv. 7, 8.)

Yes, God is my Comforter at all times, and will be so whatever I may have to endure in this life. For what can happen to me without the will of the Almighty, who pervades all things? And whatever may happen to me, Jesus hath said it: the hairs of my head are numbered! And it is the will of the Infinite Love. If I trust in Him, whatever may befall me will turn to my good.

Oh words full of consolation: “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.”

It is true, it is a hard trial for the sufferer, when God seems, if only for a moment, to have averted his face from him, and particularly when he knows that he is not to blame for the sorrows that have come upon him, or when he has unknowingly drawn down upon himself the evils which he most dreaded. But in this latter case why should he upbraid himself? Why increase his misery by unmerited self-re-

proaches? None of us can know beforehand the effects of that which we do, or which we leave undone. That which seems perfectly harmless may sometimes produce the most pernicious effects, and that from which we expect the most dangerous consequences may eventually pass off without creating any mischief. Even the wisest and most experienced of men are but short-sighted mortals. The consequences of our acts or of our negligences are in the hand of God, who rules all circumstances according to his infinite wisdom. It would be childish folly to demand of the Ruler of the universe that He should guide all things according to our pleasure, our insight, and our desires. Though what He does may not always at the moment be according to our wishes, it will infallibly prove to be for our ultimate good. Therefore, let no one grieve over those misfortunes which he has unwittingly brought down upon himself, or which he has not merited. If it could not be otherwise, it was God's will that it should be so. All the reproaches which we heap upon ourselves are only so many more proofs of our ignorance. For just as little as we could foresee the evil consequences of that which we did without any malevolent intention, or perhaps with the best purpose, just as little can we foresee how beneficial to ourselves and even to others may prove those events which we now look upon as misfortunes.

Not only may I involuntarily and unconsciously bring troubles upon myself and others, but the ignorance and thoughtlessness of others may in like manner involve me in the evil consequences of their acts or negligences. A small spark from a light in a neighbor's house may set it on fire, and the wind or

the intense heat may send the devouring element into my dwelling also. I may thus lose the half of my property, — perhaps the whole, — but whom shall I accuse? Who rules the winds, the flames, and the hours? It may happen that the grievances under which some nations are laboring, or the inimical attitude of neighboring states, make war inevitable. Whose will rules the issues? Who determines the battle? On what almost imperceptibly small circumstances do not the most momentous results depend? It is possible that the war may bring unlooked-for advantages to me and my family, but it is equally possible that it may deprive us of our all, that it may expose me to the ill-treatment of a rude soldiery, that it may ruin my trade, deprive me of my office, or throw me on a bed of sickness. If so, whom shall I accuse of my misfortunes? Have I any right to despair? Whatever has happened, or may still happen, forms part of the pre-calculated plans of Eternal Providence; and it is the Providence of love that has meted out my share. Any vain repining at what I may have lost would be like the murmurings of a child against his father, who knows better than he what is good for him; for God knows best what is good for my spirit, for which an endless existence has been prepared in the infinite house of the Father. For such endless existence many preparations may be necessary, the purpose and value of which I cannot understand, because I do not as yet know the goal towards which they are meant to lead. But this I do know, that they will surely guide me to the intended goal, for God lives! God provides! Nothing can take place without the will of the Father!

If life ended here on earth, ah yes! then everything would become incomprehensible to me, then my unmerited sorrows would rise up in judgment against the justice of God. But what rational being could entertain so preposterous a thought? And as my mind refuses to believe in such a state of things, it ought not to allow even the most painful ills that can afflict me in this life utterly to depress it. He who believes only in the present may well despair; but he who knows that the future lies open before him, his hope need never fail. The surgeon who would completely cure some cancerous wound, cuts even into the sound flesh to make sure of extracting the roots, and of restoring perfect health to the patient. Why then despair because of the momentary pain? It is inflicted only that we may be the happier in the long future that is before us. When my dear ones pine away and die, alas! it is a bitter sorrow. But they did not live for this life alone. It was not bitter to them; and though perhaps they would fain have remained longer with me, they knew not what was good for them. Now, in their glorified state, they triumph over their past errors. Their loss was a keen pang to me, for my heart clung to them with intense affection. But is heart in reality severed from heart? Are they not still living as I am, in the house of our Father? Eternal existence is our lot, how then can I allow myself to be depressed by the present moment? You may, it is true, say to yourself that the lives of your dear ones on earth might have been prolonged. But, short-sighted mortals, how do you know whether, had you been capable of tracing all the concatenations of fate, you would have wished to prolong their lives? Whatever

God does is well done. Not my will be done, but thine, O Father !

Even the illness or death of a beloved object is less painful to an affectionate disposition than the grief caused by a faithless friend, who betrays under the mask of love ; who has been deluding us, while we have felt perfect faith. What deep affliction also is not that of kind parents who are so unfortunate as to have unworthy, ill-conducted children, when they find that all their watchings, all their tears, all their teachings, all their devotion to the child from its infancy, have been in vain, — that all the hopes they so fondly cherished are dashed to the ground, — that all the cheerful prospects of their old age are overclouded ! Verily, the death of a child, if ever so dearly loved, cannot cause such poignant grief as the sight of one who has gone astray. A thousand times rather the death of an innocent being than a wicked and impious life, hateful in the sight of God and man ! Yet such fate oftentimes falls to the lot of the most pious and well-intentioned parents. Though they have neglected neither training nor instruction, according to their light, neither punishment, nor entreaties, nor warnings, nor advice, yet they have been doomed to see their honest endeavors fail. There are but few families of which some member has not gone more or less seriously astray, without any blame attaching to the parents. However hard such misfortune may be for these latter to bear, the thought that they have no cause to upbraid themselves must in some measure diminish their grief. Man's will is free, whether he select good or evil ; therefore, parents are not always able to conquer the will and the tendencies of their child, whom God has endowed with freedom of self-

determination. But one thing is certain, even those whom we give up for lost are not really so ; God will save them. He allows no soul to be given over forever to perdition. He sends suffering, and the school of trial and training begins. Knowledge will come at last, repentance will follow, and then improvement, however long delayed. Man may stray from the right path, and find himself among thorns and thistles ; but he can never entirely lose the way. Sooner or later he is driven back into the true path by the pain caused by his mistake. Yes, the lost ones turn back at last, though often with bleeding feet, and in miserable condition. God takes not pleasure in the death of a sinner, but wills that he shall live. Though we may not see the end here on earth, there is a future beyond this life. Those whom we lament over here below as lost, we shall embrace with tenfold delight when we find them again redeemed.

Thus God is ever my Comforter ; I will not, I cannot despair, however terrible may be the misfortunes that befall me. The Lord will direct all for the best. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee ; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer."

I may then count upon the everlasting kindness of the all-merciful God, even when, because of my sins, He turns away his face from me in anger, as it were. Ah, how wretched would be the lot of erring man, were his God an unforgiving God ! How soon is the false step made, and how dreadful if the error of a moment were to be expiated by an eternity of punishment ! But who would attribute to the all-per-

fect God an amount of cruelty which we should recoil from with horror even in a human being? Far be such thought from me!

I may be made unhappy by my own fault. But the very suffering that is thus entailed on me is a proof of God's love. He has made pain the consequence of sin, in order that we may learn to shun it, and that we may learn to seek again in virtue that union with Him which, in our folly, we have destroyed.

No misfortunes are so great as those we bring upon ourselves by our own fault. That affliction which our conscience tells us is unmerited, is not only bearable, but the consciousness of our innocence almost converts the pain into pleasure, and elevates the spirit above that which seemed destined to crush it.

But suffering reaches its full measure when in the looks of others we meet not sympathy and pity, but reproaches and contempt; when, instead of consolation, we are met with an expression of satisfaction that we have at least reaped the reward of our misdeeds. Yet even such taunting words as these — which can only be uttered by hard-hearted men — are not so bitter as the reproaches of our own conscience! Woe to him who can derive no consolation from his own heart! And woe to him, when, in addition to the painful consciousness that he is suffering by his own fault, that he might have avoided the misfortune that is weighing him down, comes the thought of the holiness of God, the Righteous Judge.

Yet by far the greater number of misfortunes that befall men are not the results of unavoidable circumstances, but of their own mistakes and misconduct.

Impetuosity and imprudence place many a man in difficulties which a little more self-control would have enabled him to escape. But such errors as may be put to the account of the limitations of the human mind do not cause so sharp a sting as those that spring from the perverted state of the heart. He who with malignant intent has endeavored to injure another, but has injured himself still more, — he who digs a pit for another, but falls into it himself, — from whom shall he seek consolation? The punishment that overtakes him comes from the hand of God, and his conscience tells him that he has deserved even more.

Many persons carry through life an unhealthy body; they are the victims of slow disease, which, to all appearance, can only end in death. They were once in blooming health like others. But they wasted their strength in debauchery, or they injured their health by immoderate work or pleasure. In both cases they have been guilty of intemperance. Or they have perhaps weakened their bodies by effeminate habits, instead of strengthening them judiciously, so as to enable them to bear changes of weather and temperature. They would not attend to the warnings given, and they lost their precious treasure, health, which they knew not how to value. Other persons are afflicted with bodily sufferings which have been brought on by no fault of their own; but how much lighter must not these be to bear than those for which the conscience tells the sufferer he has to thank himself.

To look upon poverty as a thing to be ashamed of is folly. Thousands are poor who have every claim to our respect. Nay, many a worthy individual is

only the more to be revered because of his poverty. But when a man has ruined his fortunes by his own senseless undertakings; when he has impoverished himself by extravagance, by ostentation, by indolence, or by profligacy; then his poverty becomes a reproach: a just reproach, as he may read in the contemptuous looks of his fellow-men; a righteous punishment, as his conscience will tell him.

Every dereliction reaps its reward. However willing man may be to overlook his own faults, God does not overlook them; sin is inevitably followed by punishment. We may think that we may give ourselves up to this or that passion without danger, but the evil consequences do not fail to present themselves, and sooner or later they destroy us. However cleverly we may conceal our misdeeds, the hour will come when our cunning will prove of no avail, and our baseness will be divulged to the world.

Alas! these self-inflicted sufferings are the direst evils of our life; and many a heart is secretly tortured by them; many a man is brought to the grave by them, though no eye but that of the Omniscient sees his misery.

But however great may be the anguish of my heart and conscience, I do not despair. Will not the All-merciful One have mercy on me also? Is He not the loving Father of all his creatures, therefore also mine?

Yea, yea! Thou art the merciful God, the Redeemer, and Thou wilt not forsake me. Great is the number of my sins, but thy mercy is greater still. I am not worthy of the life Thou hast bestowed upon me, and which I have sullied with my sins; I am not worthy to behold thy world, which I have dese-

crated by my misdeeds. I am not worthy of thy mercy and thy long-suffering. And yet, O my Redeemer, I have hope in thy forgiveness, and Thou wilt not put my hope to shame.

Hast Thou not said it, O eternally good Creator of my soul? Hast Thou not said: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee?" Thou didst love me even when I sinned so gravely against Thee. Wilt Thou love thy erring child less now that he is being chastened by suffering? When none else can or will comfort me, Thou remainest ever my Comforter.

He who bled on the cross bled for me also. And it is He who has directed me to seek refuge with Thee in my bitterest agony, and who established the holy covenant which I have broken. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed," saith Thou, my Lord and Redeemer; "but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed." (Isaiah liv. 10.) Thou art the Helper in my need, O God, and my Comforter at all times.

Have mercy upon me, then, All-merciful God; gather me again unto Thee, and relieve me of my sin. I am expiating it by the agonies of my mind, by the remorse of my conscience; and not by shedding barren tears only, but by performing holy and benevolent acts, will I endeavor to recover my lost peace. This peace, however, I can find nowhere but in thy grace and favor. Firmly trusting that my sins will be forgiven by thy eternal love, revealed to me

through Jesus Christ, I will bear my punishment willingly and patiently, and will cast away whatever may threaten me. Thou leadest all things to good for those who trust in Thee, and walk before Thee in righteousness. Amen.

GOD'S VOICE IN THE HUMAN HEART.

Though all tongues were silent, Lord,
I should find Thee everywhere;
Sun and moon thy might record,
Hill and vale their witness bear.
Earth and heaven might silent be,
Still my soul should tell of Thee.

In the summer's golden days,
In the forest's shady night,
In the blue-tongued lightning's blaze,
In the gleams of starry light,
In the storm that round me breaks,
Father, 't is thy presence speaks.

Yes, where'er my way may be,
Still I hear thy voice reprove;
"Ah, why persecut'st thou me,
In return for so much love?"
No, I'll turn to Thee once more, —
Weeping, penitent, adore.

(ACTS xxii. 7.)

TO every devout reader of the Bible, every lover of the early history of the Christian religion, there is something peculiarly awe-inspiring in the events that led to the conversion of St. Paul. Often have I read that narrative, so full of import, with deep and reflective interest, and never without being strongly moved by it, and reminded of the power of Providence.

In the days when Paul, then still called Saul, was one of the fiercest persecutors of the Christians, there was hardly a Jew who exceeded him in zeal

and activity for the suppression of the new doctrine. He forced himself into the assemblies of the Christians, however secret they endeavored to keep them, to mark the members in order to betray them, and to deliver them up to their persecutors. He himself imprisoned those who believed in Jesus, and ill-treated them. And when the blood of the pious Stephen, the first of the martyrs, was shed, Saul stood by and rejoiced in the death of the innocent man, and took care that his clothes should be kept for those who killed him.

But whatever Saul did against the Christians, he did with the full conviction that he was right. He saw in them only apostates from the old faith ; persons who denied Moses and the Prophets ; destroyers of the Law delivered to Moses by Jehovah on Mount Sinai ; enthusiasts, and lovers of new things.

But one day as he was journeying towards Damascus, with the intention of bringing away from that city the adherents of Jesus who had been discovered there and thrown into prison, and of taking them in chains to Jerusalem to be judged by the tribunals there, and when he was not far from Damascus, a great light shone from heaven around him, though it was noonday, and he fell to the ground dazzled by its brilliancy. There were others with him, but he alone was so overpowered by the light that he was blinded by it. And he heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

This vision gave a new direction to Saul's life. His convictions were entirely changed. He recognized the Divine nature of Jesus, the Saviour whom he had persecuted, and from that moment he became one of the firmest adherents of the Christian faith. The

persecutions which, a short time previously, he prepared for others, he now suffered willingly himself. The tortures, the chains, the imprisonment, which he had before inflicted on others, he now bore joyfully himself for Jesus' sake. He was baptized, gave up everything connected with his former state, even laid down the name under which he had proved himself so terrible a foe to the first Christians, and called himself thenceforward Paul.

In like manner as Paul heard the voice of God, so does every human being hear it to this day. It sounds in the ears of each one of us, in louder or gentler tones, in the most decisive moments of our lives, saying, "Why persecutest thou me?"

Every man and woman has no doubt some wish, for the fulfillment of which they passionately yearn, exerting all their energies to obtain it. The object held in view is not always a noble one, the motive not always so pure as that of Paul, who was only endeavoring to defend the old laws given to the Israelites on Mount Sinai against persons whom he considered mischievous innovators. Nevertheless, each man labors to reach the goal he has marked out for himself. His attempts prove abortive; but this only spurs him on the more, makes him the more determined to carry his point. While pressing onward, however, he cannot help feeling that something very different from that for which he is laboring must have been ordained by Providence. For the very reverse of that which he wishes, hopes, and expects is brought about by the course of events. He perceives that his will is not the will of the All-ruling Governor of the world. Nevertheless he will not yield; nevertheless he goes on striving and wrestling, as if

his weak arm could subdue the Eternal God, and arrest the progress of mighty destiny. In so doing, however, he is only preparing grievous misfortunes for himself and his family. They fall upon him at last, and then he hears the warning voice, "Why persecutest thou me?" He halts for a moment in his mistaken career. But the earnest forewarnings contained in events are in vain, — in vain the admonitions of his conscience. He is too proud to give up his plans and to turn back. The violence of his passions carries him on to certain destruction. He sees the abyss before him; but he still deludes himself. He obstinately persuades himself that he can achieve the impossible. At length he reaches the limit which God will not allow him to overstep, and he sinks down, defeated in the fullness of his perversity.

There is not one of us who does not, sooner or later, in the course of his life, hear the voice of God speaking to his heart; now in soft and gentle accents, now with terrible earnestness.

It seems to rise from the very depths of God's creation, as it lies around us in the splendor of summer, when, oppressed with grief or full of low passions, and with a distinct consciousness of all our defects and vices, we go forth into the fields and woods, where everything — from the dew-drop glittering on a blade of grass, to the stars twinkling in the heavens; from the worm in the dust, to the eagle high up in the air — speaks to us of the goodness, the love, the holiness of the Creator. When, on such occasions, our eye surveys with delight the glory of God in all his works, — when a gentle emotion stirs in our bosoms, and an inward feeling tells us how good is God, how sinful we, how pure is all that comes from

his hand, how impure our thoughts and aims! — then a soft, loving voice whispers to the heart, saying, “Why persecutest thou me?”

When autumn fills our laps with the blessed gifts of the Divine bounty, which has fertilized fields and meadows, and vineyards and orchards, that men and animals might find food sufficient for their needs, and we turn our eyes inward, and see how many sufferers we have with hard hearts refused to comfort, how many tears we have left to flow, when we compare the abundance which God has bestowed on us with the little we have done to promote the well-being of others, can we fail to feel disapproval of our own conduct? During such self-examination it is that the voice of God sounds gently and kindly in our hearts, saying, “Why persecutest thou me?”

Cities and villages are consumed by flames; widows and orphans send forth loud lamentations; sisters and brothers, and little children weep for the loved ones whom they have lost; the poor take up the wanderer's staff with trembling hands; the wealthy find themselves without a shelter over their heads. This is the power of God manifesting itself! And from amidst the havoc of war, the flames of the cities, and the destruction of the prosperity of mankind, a voice sounds, saying to the human race, “Why persecutest thou me?”

It is the same awful voice that speaks from out the thunder-cloud and in the fury of the storm, and awakens the thoughtless sinner to the seriousness of life. It is the same voice which speaks in the flash of the lightning, as it strikes now the palace of the voluptuary, now the hovel of the poor man. It is the same voice that is heard in the murmurs of the dying,

when some dreadful epidemic depopulates entire countries. It is this voice that speaks in the roaring wind when it uproots mighty trees, throws down stone walls, engulfs ships in the abyss of the ocean. It speaks, — but it is not to the dead it addresses itself. They have been taken away by God. He calls away the righteous as well as the sinner. Death is no evil, however terrible the outward circumstances that accompany it. It is to the living the voice addresses itself, to the living who are witnesses of the great events, or who are made acquainted with them. The power of the Almighty reveals itself to them in terrific warnings, and saith, “Why persecutest thou me?”

It happens frequently that some sad calamity overtakes us in the midst of the sweet intoxication of the highest earthly happiness. Ofttimes the object to which the heart clings most strongly, of which we make an idol, is the first to be wrested from us. Ofttimes he is the first to lose his goods and chattels who has made the accumulation of earthly wealth the object of his life. Ofttimes he is robbed of his honors, who sacrificed every higher duty for the gratification of his pride: he who lived for fame, for the satisfaction of being raised above his fellow-men, of having it in his power to oppress them. Ofttimes those are the first to lose friend, or husband, or child, who, in their love for these, failed to remember that in this life nothing is lasting; that we ought to attach ourselves with the strongest bonds to virtue alone; that though on earth we must live for heaven; that not what is earthly, but only that which is eternal, is worthy of true love. And the haggard looks of the covetous who have lost their all, the fall of the proud

man, the stony features of our dead loved ones, speak to us with the voice of God, saying, "Why persecutest thou me?"

But can poor, weak mortals really persecute God? Or what is meant by persecuting God?

When one man persecutes another, he does so by endeavoring to thwart him in every way, and by trying to effect exactly the contrary to what the other wills or wishes. Disobedient children persecute their parents when they repay with ingratitude the many benefits bestowed by them; when they embitter the life of those from whom they have received their own life, by hatred, contempt, neglect, and mockery, by their heartless dispositions and impious deeds.

Now, it is indubitably true that mortals cannot persecute God in the same way as they persecute their fellow-men. He is invisible to us. We cannot persecute Jesus as the Jews did, who sought Him out, brought Him before the judge, insulted Him, and dragged Him to execution. But neither could Paul thus personally persecute Jesus, who had risen from the dead, and had returned to heaven; and yet the voice from heaven cried, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

Jesus has said: "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." It is vain that we answer: "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee?" For the Lord will

answer : “ Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.”

You, then, who are full of envy and ill-will towards your fellow-creatures, who disparage them and mock at them, and seek to sully their honor and their good name, it is you who persecute Jesus. You, who are breathing revenge because you have been insulted, or at least fancy yourselves so, and who know no rest until you have inflicted some injury on your opponents, it is you who are persecuting Jesus. You, who oppress the poor, who defraud those who trust you, who retain possession of property that is not rightfully yours, who overreach the ignorant in business, who injure the rights of others openly or secretly, it is you who persecute Jesus. And you, who selfishly neglect to make others participators in the blessings that have fallen to your lot, and who prefer wasting your superfluity on sumptuous feasts, costly dresses, and expensive amusements, rather than to spend it on undertakings for the public benefit, or rather than take an energetic part in promoting the welfare of your country, it is you who are persecuting Jesus. You, whose dissolute lives are devoted to destroying the peace of innocence, and disturbing the conjugal happiness of others, and end in the destruction of your own mental and bodily strength, it is you who are persecuting Jesus. For whatever you do or leave undone towards others, you do or you leave undone towards Him.

We persecute God when we intentionally show disdain for his holy laws. In like manner parents are persecuted by their children when the latter set at naught the advice and entreaties of father and

mother, or proudly deny them before the world, or forget and neglect them in secret. Every man who lives and acts as if there were no retributive justice above the stars, denies God, if not with his lips, at least in his heart.

“There is a God!” cries the conscience of the sinner. “There is no God!” cry the deeds of the sinner. Though the laws of eternal truth and right are indelibly graven on his soul, he consummates the work of unrighteousness and falsehood. This is denial of God. He enters the temple of the All-high; he sees the Christian congregation sunk in devotion, he hears the preaching of the Holy Word, he hears the recapitulation of his duties, and he returns to his usual ways unaltered and unimproved; he lacks the will to correct his faults, he makes no attempt to render his life more noble than heretofore. This is showing a disdain for the Deity and his laws, which no man can do unpunished. There are moments of solemn emotion, when his heart is touched and softened, when perhaps he has just escaped some dreadful danger, or when he has been surprised by a great and unexpected joy, or when he is stretched on a bed of pain and sickness, or when he is weeping over the corpse of some beloved object, — he then feels the power of God, who holds him also in the hollow of his hand. He then remembers his own unworthiness before the All-high, and he hears the voice of God, saying, “Why persecutest thou me?” He reflects. He repents. He learns to see the nothingness of earthly things, and the necessity of adopting the faith of Jesus, — the only faith that has the power of making men happy, — and of consecrating himself to virtue and to God. He prays. He makes solemn

promises. But the moment goes by. The important hour of his life is forgotten. The first excitement of his feelings subsides. He hardly retains a recollection of what has taken place. Speaking of the past, he says, with audacious flippancy, "I was a foolish enthusiast at the time," and with that he consoles himself in his degradation. He breaks the promises which he swore before the Omniscient. Again the world becomes more to him than eternity; the judgments of men more than the judgment of God. This is disdain and desecration of the dignity and majesty of the Most High. To any of his fellow-beings, to a prince or to a king, he would perhaps have kept his promise; but to God he breaks it. Before men, the children of the dust, he desires to appear honest; not so before God, the Eternal. The punishments of men he fears: of the retributive justice dealt out by the All-just he has no apprehension.

Even the want of steadfastness of purpose that leads us at one moment to determine to be good, and the next to be guilty of a bad action, is a violation of the profound reverence which we owe to the Lord of our life, the Ruler of the universe. The thoughtlessness with which we give ourselves up to the influence of outward things, and which prevents us from acting ever in strict accordance with duty, and with the exhortations of Jesus, but on the other hand leads us to consult expediency only; this thoughtlessness or levity is an insult to the majesty of God, to whom we refuse to make any sacrifice if it is to cost the least self-denial, while at the same time we are ready to make the greatest sacrifices for the satisfaction of our sensual desires.

Therefore it is that the voice of God sounds so sol-

emly in the joyful, as well as in the sorrowful hours of our life, saying, "Why persecutest thou me?"

Ah! let every one who understands the cry, turn back. Why do we persecute Him who watches over us with infinite love? Why despise Him who protects and upholds us, and on whose will our very life-breath depends? Why deny Him who reveals Himself to us in the splendors of the universe, in the gifts of nature, in the sorrows and joys of life, and in the innermost depths of our conscience?

Turn back full of repentance, like Paul, when he had heard the warning voice, and like him become, instead of a persecutor of Jesus, one of his most faithful followers and witnesses,—his living image in thought, speech, and action. Even this meditation is a call of God to thee, O my spirit, saying, "And thou, also, why persecutest thou me?"

O my Saviour, life of my life, I will no longer be numbered among thy persecutors. Nay, I will bear in mind that every injury I inflict upon my fellow-men I inflict upon thy brethren, upon thyself. I will remember that whatever good I may do in promoting the welfare and happiness of others, Thou wilt accept as if done unto Thee.

Alas! how often, O my God, my Father on high, how often have I not forsaken Thee, and inclined towards sin! But Thou didst spare me, Thou hadst mercy on me, and yet I forgot Thee, and again forsook Thee. O have pity on me; keep not an account of my offenses, forgive me, merciful Father, and once more take thy child into thy bosom. In spirit I prostrate myself before thine exalted throne, and weep for my sins. But even my scalding tears cannot wash out the stains on my soul. The days of

my past life rise up before Thee and accuse me. Ah, forgive, forgive! I will strive to make each of my days henceforward a blessing to myself; so that I may look up to Thee with hope and courage, and say, "Abba, dear Father in heaven!"

THE DUTY OF SETTING A GOOD EXAMPLE.

To Thee, my God, to Thee alone I'll live,
After thy grace and thy example strive,
That, mirrored in my life, a glimpse of thine
To all may shine.

And should the world its scorn envenomed fling,
Thy love approving, shall remove the sting;
Who dare declare himself, unknowing Thee,
Thine own to be?

(MATT. v. 15, 16.)

WHEN we occasionally hear of some terrible crime, or some extraordinary act of profligacy, people at once begin to lament over the degeneracy of the times, the decay of morals, the decline in religion. But there is another and far more striking proof of the common degeneracy, because it hardly admits of an exception, which, however, is passed over in silence. This proof is the fact that but very few Christians have the courage to appear as good and noble as they are or would wish to be, for fear of being thought ridiculous. Even the common proverb, "You must howl with the wolves when you are among them," confirms the existence of this weakness.

There are few persons, — let every one lay his hand on his heart and say whether this be not true, — there are few persons who have firmness enough to defy the judgment of the great multitude, when there is a question of carrying out principles to which it is opposed. They do not shrink so much from be-

ing wrong as from being ridiculous, and would rather endure the blame of the good than the sneers of the unworthy. Is not this as much a proof of the weakness of those who, from fear of others, refrain from being as virtuous as they ought to be, as it is of the low tone of public opinion, which laughs at the noblest men as fools and enthusiasts?

Thou art surrounded by a society composed of unprincipled profligates. Youth, fortune, and high spirits entitle thee and invite thee to take part in their pleasures. Thou art sometimes shocked by the immoral tone of their conversation; at others, by their intemperance in pleasure, and their sins against good manners; but hast thou the courage to express thy disapprobation, and thus to make thyself the target of their wit and their ridicule?

Thou hast often found thyself in the midst of a circle of people more or less known to thee, in which the animated conversation has suddenly turned upon the virtues or defects of certain persons. Heartless scandal soon reared her head, and the good name of some worthy man was sacrificed for the sake of a witty phrase; or the innocence of a pure reputation was rendered suspicious. Perhaps thou knewest at the time how untrue were the words spoken by the laughing lips of malice; but hadst thou sufficient moral firmness to abide by thy better conviction, and to stand up for the person attacked, and to oppose the slanderer? Lay thy hand upon thy heart and ask thyself, how often thou didst acquiesce against thy better judgment in order to conform to the tone of those around thee; how often thou hast transgressed a sacred duty in order not to lose thy reputation for politeness.

In pulpits and on platforms we may perhaps still hear the noble word *patriotism* ; but how many are there who would not feel embarrassed to take an unusual step, or to make an unusual sacrifice out of patriotism, or who would venture in society to urge others to noble deeds for the sake of their common country ? However good and useful an undertaking may be, every one hangs back from being the first to enter upon it. They fear lest they should be called foolish or pharisaical, or be considered ambitious enthusiasts, or virtuous knights-errant. They wait to see what others will do, and call that modesty which in reality is but the effect of sensitive vanity.

Nay, that is not true Christian modesty which makes us ashamed of doing the good we feel the power and the inclination to do. That is not Christian modesty which makes us prefer to take part in senseless and unworthy proceedings rather than to make ourselves conspicuous by refusal. It is false shame, it is a betrayal of virtue, it is self-desecration ; thou placest the opinion of erring mortals higher than the truths taught by Jesus, thy Divine Master ; thou hast more respect for the judgment of the world than for the judgment of God ; thou wouldst serve two masters, and betrayest them both.

That true modesty which is the highest ornament of a Christian never makes a show of virtue ; but it never sacrifices what is right to the opinion of fools. Modesty prefers doing good in secret and silence, but it does not refuse to do what is right because it must be done in public. It has no desire to win fame by its actions ; and therefore it has the courage to bear scorn and ridicule if need be.

The true follower of Jesus confesses Him openly.

A friend who, though he calls himself so in secret, blushes to own me in public, must always be suspicious in my eyes. He cannot be sincerely my friend. And thus, likewise, he is not a Christian, not a true follower of Christ, who is timid enough to deny Him by word and action before the world. "Whosoever shall confess me before men," said Christ to his disciples when preparing them for going into the world, "him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

To act rightly and in strict accordance with principle, at all times and under all circumstances, without reference to the opinions or the sarcasms of the vulgar multitude, is a very different thing from acting in accordance with pharisaical pride.

The Pharisee, it is true, also does good in public, but he does it, not from a pure sense of duty, but from selfish motives. He makes a boast of virtue which does not dwell in his heart. He speaks the truth, but not so much out of love as out of hatred. He gives alms to the poor, but he is not actuated by real charity, but by the desire to gain the approval and esteem of the world. He readily undertakes to support public institutions, and promote the general welfare, but with the hope of winning the favor of the great, and of fixing the eyes of the people upon himself. It is not virtue he aims at, but rewards, honors, higher offices, or more extended influence. Though he preaches charity in public, he works in secret at the downfall of his rival; though he declaims in public against the prevalent immorality, he satisfies in secret his lusts and his love of revenge;

he who, in church, or at the theatre, or when reading or listening to a touching narrative, sheds tears of sympathy and pity, nevertheless allows himself to cheat widows and orphans out of their money, or to neglect property intrusted to him, or to plunge some poor family into ruin because they will not do his bidding.

How far more exalted is the mind of the true follower of Jesus! He strives for virtue, not for the mere appearance of it; he looks to the act, not to the fame that is to be gained by it. He does his duty, even should the world condemn him. He walks in the path of righteousness, even though it lead to tribulation, as Jesus Christ walked courageously in the path that led to the cross!

The truly wise and virtuous man must not only do his duty in secret as well as before men, but, in addition to this, he must seize joyfully every occasion of influencing others by his example, and of inciting them to generous and noble thoughts and deeds.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,” is the command of the Divine Founder of our religion.

By setting an example of goodness, we are to encourage others to act in like manner. This is a duty the more incumbent on every righteous man in the present day, as it is becoming more and more common to be ashamed of one's virtues as well as of one's faults; as it is considered a merit to wrap one's self in impenetrable mystery, and dignified to assume an amount of reserve which makes it impossible for any one to know what we really are. Where such a tone reigns in society, it is easy for a bad man to pass

himself off for good ; for how is the one to be distinguished from the other ? Where this concealment of one's true views and opinions has come to be considered as a mark of good breeding, there artful hypocrisy must rank higher than truth, appearances must be placed above reality, and conventionality above piety and cordiality. One man must be like another ; all must be, more or less, masters in deception ; all must be, more or less, the slaves of secret selfishness.

It is the duty of every Christian — of every wise man — to avoid all artful and unworthy submission to established custom. For a man is very apt to become in reality what at first he only gives himself the appearance of being, and habit soon becomes second nature.

But this duty is doubly urgent and solemn when we live in times in which vice assumes fine names, and walks barefaced through the streets. Place the example of God-fearing virtue boldly before the eyes of the people, when the brazen villain dares to flaunt his baseness in the open day. Let thyself be known as a man faithful and true to his word, and inspire the weak by thy heroic example, while others toy with their oaths, and represent treachery as prudence. Show thyself in thine innocence and thy stern morality in the midst of those who call laxity of morals amiable tolerance, and who find excuses for adulterers. Vice seduces, virtue inspires, by example. Thou wilt not long stand alone. The respect of the high-minded will surround thee, though sinners will avoid thee.

It is the duty of every Christian, and of every wise man, to be a light in the path of his fellow-men ; for

a thousand excellent maxims will not touch the heart as much as one example of a just and noble deed. It is by his example that the World-Redeemer has set a light before us. He would not have been the Saviour of the world had He not had the courage to die on the cross for the redemption of mankind. Had He not inspired his disciples with equal fortitude, neither they nor the martyrs of the primitive Church would, for the sake of his Word, have borne death and shame so joyfully. Hell would have triumphed, heathendom would have conquered, eternal truth would have died with the lips that first preached it.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works,” cries Jesus Christ; and He acted in accordance with his words. This exhortation to Christian heroism goes forth to the high as well as to the low, to the young as well as to the old. We are, therefore, called upon *intentionally* to do the good which we do in public.

There is, however, no indication in the exhortation that we are to push ourselves forward, and to endeavor to attract to ourselves and our actions the attention of all. Nay, we know that nothing has less effect upon the hearts of others than conduct adopted for mere example's sake. Such far-sought opportunities for exhibiting ourselves from an advantageous point of view destroy the effect the good might otherwise produce; as, under such circumstances, the actors seldom escape a suspicion of being incited by secret vanity. It is not the good deed alone that is to be imitated, but the disposition from which it springs. Indeed, there is no necessity for our anxiously seeking opportunities for setting a good example, for God will not fail to provide numerous occasions on which

we may manifest our inward worth and our highest convictions. Set an example of forbearance when the negligence or malignity of others rouses thee to anger. Set an example of generosity when thou hast an opportunity of humiliating thine enemy. Set an example of fidelity when others, with easy pliancy, conform to circumstances, and break their oaths with a mere shrug of the shoulders. Set an example of noble steadfastness when seduction ventures to approach thee with flattering tongue, and endeavors to undermine thy virtue. Set an example of patient resignation to the will of God when thy wealth melts away, when thy loved ones die, when friends turn their backs upon thee because fortune has deserted thee.

We shall never lack opportunities in social life of standing forward as upright men or women. Let us but have the courage to prove ourselves to be Christians by word and deed, in public as in secret, and we shall have set a good example.

The duty of setting a good example is the more obligatory when we hold a position in society which makes us objects of general attention. Thus the responsibility of the father is greater than that of his child; more is expected from rulers than from subjects; more from the rich than from the poor; more from the cultivated than from the ignorant. The wider the sphere of thy influence, the more powerful is the example of thy virtues, the more seductive the example of thy vices. Thou dost not live and act for thyself alone,—thy virtues illuminate, thy vices darken, the world around thee.

The example of virtue is the more attractive when it is set forth in acts the performance of which in-

volves a sacrifice. Therefore Christ pointed out to his disciples the poor widow, who modestly approached the treasury, and put in the mite which she had perhaps saved up by the greatest self-denial.

When an enervated old man shuns the follies of youth ; when persons in pecuniary distress avoid extravagance ; when the naturally tender-hearted abstain from cruelty, or gentle dispositions refrain from anger, — how can we look upon them as offering an example for imitation, or what claims have they on our admiration ?

But when a youth, in the full strength of his years and passions, shows by his conduct that frivolity is hateful to him ; when he turns away with disgust from the allurements of luxury and sensual gratifications ; when he joyfully submits to the severe discipline of labor and order, though he is not insensible to the pleasures of life, — he excites, with justice, the admiration of his fellow-men, and the desire of his young companions to follow his example.

Therefore, let each one of us endeavor to set an example in those virtues which are the least expected of us. Let the warrior who hastens to the battlefield, whither duty towards his sovereign and his country call him, set a brilliant example of humanity. Let him spare the unarmed, and protect the helpless against the cruelty of his more brutal companions ; let him save the property of his enemy from the hands of the rapacious, and defend innocence against the attacks of lawless violence.

Let him who stands high, and who possesses fame and power and splendor, set an example of modest simplicity. Let him prefer the calm consciousness of having done his duty to the flattery of base self-

seekers. Let him honor even the humblest of his subordinates, as a man and a brother.

Let him on whom God has bestowed unusual capacities, who has acquired the fame of possessing great knowledge and high culture, set a noble example of respect for religion. He is looked up to by the rude multitude. Let him by his example lead them to reverence for what is holy, and for the time-honored institutions which have been founded for the moral and religious instruction of the people.

Let the rulers of the people and the magistrates and judges set the example of implicit obedience to the laws; let them avoid even the appearance of making any exceptions in their own favor, where they might do so. Let them honor every good citizen; let them not judge according to the person; nor allow themselves to be influenced by party feeling or family affection, so as to be hostile to one because he belongs to an opposite party, and to favor another because he is a relative, to the detriment of persons of higher merit.

Let the wealthy set an example of wise simplicity of life, and the rich of humility. Let them prefer the fame of having saved an unhappy family from ruin to that of giving the most luxurious dinners. Let them put less store on the possession of expensive furniture, but go forth into the dwellings of poverty and soothe the last moments of some wretched sufferer. Let them clothe themselves and their families in less costly apparel, in order that they may have the means of giving the needy warm raiment. Let them desist from the pleasures of the card-table, in order that they may prepare a life of happiness for some poor orphans.

Let the citizen of humbler estate set the example of a refinement of feeling which revolts against ignoble and low pleasures, and prefers such as spring from the cultivation of the mind. Let him ennoble his condition by honesty in his trade, and order in his household, by good manners and modest dignity of deportment. Let no word of hateful and contemptible professional envy be heard under his roof; but let him be content with his position, and without pride or defiance raise himself by his honorable character and acquirements to a level with the best among the people.

Let the teachers of the religion of Jesus set the sublime example of tolerance towards other sects and religions; let them hate men's vices, not their faith; but let them by the victorious power of their example inspire others with the Christian virtues.

And let it be my aim also thus to help to spread the kingdom of God on earth. Alas! how little have I hitherto contributed towards this; how often has not the prevailing tone of society made me swerve in my noblest intentions; how often have I not been embarrassed when I have been called upon to let my light shine before others; how often have I not been ashamed of my best feelings, of my uprightness, and my piety, because I feared the ridicule of the vulgar herd!

But henceforth it shall be otherwise. Hereafter I will not deny my Jesus and his followers. I will confess *Thee* before men, O Divine Saviour of my soul, as Thou wilt confess *me* before thy Father. What is my aim on earth? Is it merely to please worldly-minded men? Nay, O Father, above all it is to make myself worthy of Thee. I live not for the fleeting dream of a few years, but for eternity.

Though the scoffers may smile at my leaving the beaten track, though men who know no other world than the narrow field of their earthly circumstances may misjudge me, I will have the courage to be good, and will set an example to others in all such virtues as may perhaps prove most difficult to myself to perform.

Ah ! what happiness would it not be to find that I have influenced others for good ; that by my example I have led others to embrace virtue, to choose eternal bliss ! I may do this, and I will do it ; for what can prevent me but my own weakness ! Amen.

SINS OF OMISSION.

Father of every soul, how deep
Our sins, — how oft we fall!
Ah! who the record dread can keep?
Who, Lord, can count them all?
How oft do we forget Thee, Lord,
Thy love so fatherly, thy word,
The dignity of life!

Who, his own sinful heart that knows,
Unshamed thy face can greet?
Who shrinks not from thy light, nor bows
With trembling, lest he meet
The judgment that his thoughts confess
Thy might demands, thy holiness, —
Who can before Thee stand?

Not one; and this thy pity moves;
Thou wilt'st that we shall live,
Not die, and guard'st us with thy love,
And wilt with joy forgive.
To Thee, who hast the power, the will,
We pray with tears for mercy still,
O pardoning Comforter!

(JAMES iv. 17.)

WHEN we speak of the value of other men, when we praise the goodness of persons more or less known to us, how uncertain is not frequently the standard by which we measure them! Nay, even respecting our own worth we often form the most erroneous notions, because we compare ourselves with others whom we know to have been guilty of some special fault or other, and in so doing we are penetrated, if not by that pharisaical pride which Jesus

so strongly condemned, yet by a feeling akin to it, and which makes us inclined to say, "I thank Thee, my God, that I am not like one of these!"

We generally deem ourselves justified in considering any person as below us in worth who has committed some fault of which we have not yet been guilty; which in our actual circumstances and frame of mind we are not tempted to commit; or which, in our special position, we could not commit. But are we therefore better than he who has erred in this direction?

There are undoubtedly persons who, in their own way, and judged according to the circumstances amid which they are placed, are more pure and virtuous-minded than I am, yet who have been guilty of some gross misdemeanor which has justly brought down upon them the contempt of their fellow-citizens, and the punishment of the law. Their education, their temperament, and various other causes have perhaps led them, in violation of their better will, to commit offenses of which our education, our temperaments, and surrounding circumstances render it quite impossible that we should be guilty. But are we therefore better than they? Have we been exposed to powerful temptations, and victoriously proved the strength of our principles in spite of the force of outward allurements, and of the excitement of inward passions?

How often do we not condemn with hard-hearted severity some unhappy criminal who, in a fearful moment of uncontrollable violence, has become a murderer, and has with perfect justice been seized by the officers of the law and punished accordingly! He has become a murderer, and yet, except in this point

of his unconquerable passion, he was perhaps one of the kindest, most benevolent of men. He has deserved his punishment, no doubt; nothing can justify or excuse the terrible deed he committed; his deep-felt repentance cannot undo what has been done. But am I a better man than he, because as yet I have no murder on my conscience? Can I, in the depths of my heart, praise my own moderation and gentleness, when perhaps these supposed virtues spring solely from my natural timidity and indolence?

How often is some fallen maiden spoken of with a malignant sneer, or with proud, disdainful pity, while her stern judges hug themselves with satisfaction, thanking God that they are not as she! Yet, O relentless sister! perhaps the unhappy one whom thou so greatly despisest was more chaste in heart than thou. Perhaps she loved virtue more earnestly and deeply; perhaps she has sustained more conflicts with passion, — conflicts which the eye of the Almighty alone witnessed, — until in some unhappy moment, forgetful of herself and of all that is holy and pure, she succumbed. Thou, O severe judge of thy erring sister, thou mayst indeed boast of never having been guilty of any serious false step; but canst thou put down this to thine own merit? Wert thou ever placed in a position to have such dangerous feelings awakened in thee? Is it thy love of virtue that has kept thee in the right path; or is it merely fear of danger, or perhaps even want of opportunity, that has saved thee? Have thy heart and thy imagination never been polluted?

When the adulteress was brought before Jesus Christ, He, instead of condemning her, exclaimed,

“Let him who feels himself guiltless throw the first stone!” And ought we not in the present day to recall to mind these words whenever some erring fellow-creature is made known to us, and his fault is brought into the broad light of day, while the knowledge of our errors lies hidden in the secret recesses of our own hearts? We must not consider ourselves to be more perfect, merely because we have never as yet drawn upon ourselves the attention of the world by some grave offense, or some striking criminal act.

It is true that, in common life, those are termed good, and are considered persons of unblemished reputation, who have no decided blot upon their character; and many no doubt think that it is sufficient merit to be able to assert that no one can bring a complaint against them; and believe that this gives them a claim upon the esteem of their fellow-citizens.

But is it really a merit not to be a criminal? Is the wealthy man deserving of praise because he is not a thief or a robber? or is the enfeebled old man praiseworthy because he is not a seducer of innocence? or the timid man, because he is not a bully and an assassin? Can we appear before God with light hearts, feeling sure of his approbation, when we can say no more in our own favor than that we have not deceived or betrayed others, that we are not drunkards or slanderers? Are acts which we have not committed really actions? And can we demand to reap where we have not sown?

Nay, do not deceive yourselves. God cannot be mocked! Our duty is not to do the least possible evil, but the most good possible. “That servant,” says Christ, “which knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will,

shall be beaten with many stripes." (Luke xii. 47.) To have omitted to do the good which we have it in our power to do, is in itself a crime. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James iv. 17.)

The greater number of mortals being only intent upon securing earthly advantages, — thinking merely of their houses, their comforts, their amusements, — never rise above the vulgar or the commonplace. No one can with right allege anything against them, they say; but just as little can their own consciences commend them. They are far too timid and too indolent to do evil; but they are equally timid and indolent in regard to doing what is right and good. They think that they have done as much as can be expected from them when they have helped to carry out some work of beneficence, which they have taken part in either because it was in accordance with their temperament, or to escape from *ennui*, or from a desire to win the approbation of others. Alas! this is not virtue. These people are, on the contrary, poor, contemptible sinners; for they have never made an effort, and have only done that which, for many reasons, they could not help doing.

"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin!" Such is the word of God.

Every human being who has reached years of discretion knows the duties that are incumbent on him. Even if he have neither father nor mother, nor teacher, to impress upon him his duties towards God, towards his fellow-men, and towards the animals, a voice will awaken within him that will tell him what is right and what is wrong. Go forth into the most distant regions of the world inhabited by men;

however rude and barbarous they may be, you will find that they know how to distinguish between right and wrong. For the Deity reveals Himself in the reason and inner consciousness of all men, so that no one can excuse himself, and the Christian least of all. Because that which is perhaps but a dim and vague conception in the mind of the barbarous heathen, Jesus has placed before his followers in language of unequalled lucidity. We know the words in which He revealed to us the holy will of our Creator; we know his life, so full of innocence, justice, love, and self-sacrifice for the welfare of man: it is a mirror held up to us, that we may conform ourselves to the image therein. How then can we excuse ourselves with ignorance, when we fail to do the good on earth that we have the power to do?

Nor can any one complain with justice that he lacks opportunities for performing meritorious acts, and for being useful to his fellow-creatures; for not a day passes without many such occasions occurring, had we but strength and courage to avail ourselves of them.

It is true, we may not be able to carry out all the good which we may wish to effect; but let us beware not to fix our attention so exclusively on the aim which we cannot attain, that we neglect that which lies nearer to us, and which we may accomplish with far smaller means. It is a common fault with many to look far beyond their appointed sphere of activity, and to deplore that they cannot engage in this or that beneficent undertaking, because their circumstances will not admit of it; or that they are not in the place of some other person, in which case they would be so much more useful and active.

Confine your views to your own sphere : it is wide enough to allow free scope to your piety and to all your virtues. Say not, were I as rich as such a one, I would make a more worthy use of my money. If so, why dost thou not make a more worthy use of the smaller means that are at thy command ? Thou hast sufficient to allow of thy giving away a considerable portion of it without injuring thyself and thy family. Why dost thou not at least supply such small superfluity as thou hast, to assuage the sufferings of others, instead of using it to increase thine own comforts, to swell the number of thy amusements, to gratify thy palate with better wines and more expensive viands ? Or if thy circumstances be so restricted that thou canst not spare anything for others, hast thou not the power of speech ? Hast thou no wealthy acquaintance, from whom thou mightest, by exerting thyself a little, obtain help for those that need it ? It is always easier to speak for others than to speak for ourselves.

Say not, had I the power of the great sovereigns, I would give to the world the peace it is sighing for ; I would restore amity, well-being, and concord among nations. For why dost thou not carry out such praiseworthy work within thine own sphere ? Why dost thou not make peace with thine own enemies ? Why dost thou so proudly refuse to offer thy hand in reconciliation to those who have offended thee ? Why dost thou not resist the temptation to scoff at the failings of others, which causes so much ill-will ? Why art thou so weak as to hold thy peace when others are spoken ill of in thy presence, or to look with indifference at the misunderstandings existing among thy acquaintances, instead of endeavoring to

persuade the angry friends to be mutually indulgent and forgiving? Or why dost thou even encourage them in their hard judgments, or by carrying tales between them, widen the breach that separates them?

Say not: had I chosen this or that profession, did I hold this or that office, how active, unwearying, and useful should I not be! But in my present vocation I am hampered, and am not able to do one thousandth part of that for which I feel the capacity within me. Why art thou not, then, with this superior capacity, the foremost of all in thy narrower sphere? Why dost thou not prove by the way in which thou fillest the place thou occupiest that thou art worthy of a wider field of action? He who knows not how to make his one talent productive, why should he have more intrusted to him? But if thou hast once attained the highest degree of perfection in thy trade or thy profession, how easy will it not be for thee to extend thy useful activity far beyond its limits?

“To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

There is no human being who may not find each day of his life at least *one* opportunity of doing good. This is true, even of the beggar in the street. But in order to discover this opportunity, we must be intent on doing so. Unfortunately, this is what we are not. And this is omitting to do good. Do not, therefore, accuse Providence of having placed thee in circumstances in which thou hast no opportunity of exercising thy virtues. Rather accuse thine own indifference which prevents thee from opening thine eyes and seeing what lies nearest to thee.

It is not opportunities, but the most essential qual-

ities for doing good, which lack thee, namely, sincere love of your fellow-creatures, and a true desire to be useful. He who possesses these will not fail to discover some means of doing a kind service to every one with whom he comes in contact, and even to be useful to the absent. He will always be able to save something from his necessities to help others, or to promote some public undertaking for the general welfare; and if he have not money to bestow, he will at least give kind words, good advice, and comfort and consolation where needed.

Ask thyself, in the quiet of the evening, after each day's work: "Hast thou done all the good that thou mightest have done? Hast thou fully availed thyself of every little opportunity offered thee to exercise thy virtues?" And if thou dost not remember that any such have occurred, then ask thyself this one question more: "What should I have done under the circumstances had I desired to be a pattern of benevolence and kindness?" Thy conscience will then perhaps reply, "And thou hast not done it!" "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

And the easier it would have been for us to do the good which we have omitted, the greater is our sin in the eyes of God, the incorruptible Judge of our worth, and the greater also in the judgment of our own conscience. For not only is every mortal endowed with a knowledge of what is right, but each one has an especial aptitude for some particular virtue.

He who is by nature tender-hearted and full of feeling can have no difficulty in performing the noble duty of showing sympathy with, and pity for,

the unfortunate. Why then does he not cultivate this divine instinct of his heart? Why does he even do violence to it by endeavoring to smother its utterances? Alas! at one moment he is held back from performing some act of kindness by vanity, by fear of what others will say; at another moment he is prevented by his love of ease from visiting the homes of the poor of whom he has heard, or from obtaining further information as to the best means of helping them out of their misery. At another time it is unpardonable levity that interferes with the fulfillment of his duty; and then, again, it is his love of luxury which absorbs the means with which others might have been helped.

He who is by nature courageous and determined cannot find it difficult to adopt the cause of the oppressed. Why then does he, being an enemy of all injustice, act so little in accordance with his noble disposition? Alas! it is self-interest which causes him to be silent in spite of his better feelings; it is all kinds of considerations for persons whose favor he would be sorry to lose, which induce him to allow injustice to pass for justice.

For him who enjoys general esteem, and who exercises an influence over the opinions and the will of his fellow-citizens, it must be an easy matter to start or to promote numerous undertakings in regard to which others, with their best will and utmost endeavors, could effect nothing. The mere expression of his approbation, a single word of encouragement from him, will often suffice to accomplish a useful object. Why then does he not speak the word? Alas! because after all he is indifferent to the matter, and he would not take the trouble to reflect upon its im-

portance ; or because his indolence is satisfied with the counter question, “ Why should I mix myself up with things that do not concern me ? ” or because the undertaking would only be of importance to a stranger, or to a city or village with which he has no connection.

He is doubly responsible who not only omits to do the good which he has frequent opportunities of effecting, but also that which his natural capacities and the means he possesses render it especially easy for him to accomplish. In such cases the neglect of the higher duty evidently springs from some vice which has grown strong within him, whether its name be self-seeking, self-love, envy, pride, or indolence, frivolity, or thoughtlessness.

Thou lovest those who love thee, and who flatter thee ; thou doest good unto them from whom thou expectest services in return. What merit is this ? Do not the heathens as much, and even the animals ? Jesus Christ hath taught thee higher duties, and if thou failest in these, oh do not flatter thyself that thy heart has any real worth ! Thou dost not commit crimes, thou dost not deceive, slander, steal, or persecute thy fellow-men. But what merit is this ? Even the dead stone that thou strikest with thy foot does not this.

How poor wilt thou not be, O unhappy mortal, when thy undying soul, gifted with great capacities for a higher and eternal existence, with knowledge of truth and falsehood, with a strong will to effect what it wishes, shall be called to render its account, and can boast of nothing more than of having remained unsullied by gross crimes ? Can the unfeeling stone lay claim to the bliss of heaven ? and can the indolent

servant, who has buried his master's talent in the earth, expect to be intrusted with more?

How poor wilt thou not find thyself, unhappy man, when thy fearful self-deception ceases! Thou think-est that, though not graced with many virtues, thou art nevertheless pure from any great wrong; but see, the innumerable occasions on which thou hast omitted to do what thou knewest to be right and good are so many sins for which thou art answerable. The solemn hour will one day strike, when thou wilt shudder at thine own indifference in regard to all this good that has been left undone; for indifference towards a virtue which we had it in our power to exercise, is indifference towards eternity, in which retribution will be meted out to thee; indifference towards the God of holiness. Every opportunity to do good which presents itself to us is, as it were, an invitation from God to our hearts to devote themselves to Him, — a prayer of our good angel that we will become more God-like.

And woe is me! how shall I stand before Thee, O Heavenly Father, when my days and hours, and my many sins of omission are counted up before Thee? However great may be thy mercy, what hope can I have of a higher existence and higher happiness, when I have willfully neglected to establish my claims?

I confess before Thee my weaknesses and my shortcomings. Yea, I am a sinner, and a far greater sinner than I often thought I was. My sins of omission are the crimes that weigh me down, and I cannot justify them before Thee.

But my life is not yet at an end. All-merciful God, thy long-suffering still bears with thine unworthy child. I have, perhaps, before me a long

series of days, during which I may show more than barren repentance, during which I may give proofs of a will stronger in virtue and more pleasant in thy sight. My life is not yet at an end, and henceforward I will look joyfully for every opportunity that may occur for me to contribute to the welfare and happiness of others, be it by word, by deed, or by feeling. O Father, Thou dost not demand more of thy children than they can perform! Why then should I not gladly do all that my strength will admit of? Ah! forgive my many sins of omission! Father, forgive us our trespasses! Amen.

MAN, THE AUTHOR OF HIS OWN FATE.

How often is the bliss,
God-given, thrown away ;
How often do the lusts
Of flesh to sin betray ;
While still unwarned, the foot
Shuns not the serpent's sting
That pierces, though unseen,
Hidden where flowerets spring.

What noble is, and good,
What can my brethren serve,
What on the path of life
Can best from falls preserve ;
What good men honor most,
Gives strength in sorrow's hour,
Is worth my earnest search,
And lies within my power.

(1 Cor. iii. 6-9.)

WERE not all human beings convinced that they may by forethought and judgment establish their own happiness, they would make no effort to improve their condition on earth, but would sit down patiently and expect everything from the favor of Heaven. However, without labor there is no reward ; without trouble, no gain ; and dangers surround us which only prudence can avert.

The wisdom of God has ordained that man shall not live in a state of indolent helplessness. Therefore has he been endowed with free will to do as he listeth, and with understanding to discriminate and to choose what is best. Nay, divine wisdom even

drives him by the hard law of necessity to conquer his indolence, and to prepare for himself a happier condition through the exertion of the capacities with which he has been gifted. To the beasts of the field Providence has given raiment of hair and wool ; the birds it has clad in feathers to protect them against the inclemencies of weather and temperature ; but man it has left bare and naked. So also the animals have been provided with natural weapons of defence against their enemies, with rare strength and wonderful swiftness, while man has received nothing from Nature wherewith he can defend himself against the horns of the bull, the strength of the lion, the claws of the tiger, or the fangs of the serpent. She has, however, given him understanding and reason ; that he may invent and provide his own raiment, his own weapons, and everything that he requires. She has forced him to exert his mental powers, in order to gain the mastery over the animals ; to win from the barren earth the means of nourishment ; and not only to build for himself, in common with his fellows, houses, villages, and fortified towns, but to devise laws and regulations which may insure peace and harmony, and security to all.

Now, as it is the Divine will that every human being should by the use of his understanding and his other faculties prepare his own fate in this world, we cannot but look upon that trust in God as blind and exaggerated, and that piety as very inert, which induces men to lay down their work in the hope that God will not fail to provide what is good and necessary for them. It is indolent piety to believe that we can effect everything by prayers and church-going, and that we may exclusively by the grace of God,

or what men term a lucky chance, attain to riches, honors, and consideration. It is false confidence in God to believe that, in order to be pleasant in his sight, and to become a participator in eternal bliss hereafter, it is sufficient to rely upon the death of Jesus, on the mercy of God, and on the prayers of saints and other men; and that it is by no means necessary to lead a life of strict duty, rich in every virtue, and in acts of private and public beneficence.

Nay, it was not without a purpose that the Creator bestowed upon us such varied faculties. He who neglects to use these neglects the talent intrusted to him, and his perversity will bring destruction on himself.

But just as senseless as it is to expect everything from God and nothing from ourselves; rather to await the good fortune that may befall us by some incalculable concatenation of circumstances than to prepare comfort for ourselves by industry, order, and economy: just as foolish is it, on the other hand, to rely exclusively on our own strength, and to expect nothing from the grace of God. How poor are we not if He be not with us! How helpless, if He doth not give his blessing to our endeavors, that is to say, if He doth not so guide all circumstances that that which our industry accomplishes, or our thoughts invent, may turn out advantageous for us! In vain may the husbandman till his field in the sweat of his brow: rain, wind, and hail-storms may pass over it with devastating power. In vain may we have laid plans for our happiness: other persons may come between us and our objects, and, without being aware of it, destroy all our prospects. Hence the old and well-known proverb: Man proposes, God disposes!

The most important events in our lives are frequently the consequences of circumstances on which we had least of all calculated ; and such things as we have spent much trouble upon as frequently bring us no advantage. Yea, the fate of battles, the fate of large empires, has often depended upon the smallest so-called accident, which has defeated all the calculations of men.

Our will, our strength, and our judgment are in our own power, but circumstances are in the power of God alone ; and through these He governs the fate of men, — through these He blesses or renders futile their endeavors.

How then can we say that man is the author of his own fate? Are these meaningless words? They are so, if by our fate we mean matters which are beyond our control ; if we fancy that our power can effect impossibilities. As impossible as it is for a mortal to stretch forth his hand and stay the sun in its course, or guide the stars, just as impossible is it for him to determine the wills, the thoughts, and the actions of all his fellow-men in accordance with his own purposes and to his own advantage. These things lie beyond the sphere of his power. But then his real fate is not dependent upon them, but merely the state of his physical being, of his fortune, and of his social relations. He whose happiness is entirely founded upon such outward events, has built it upon a very frail foundation indeed. He will ever be the victim of changing circumstances, which at one moment raise him up, and at another lay him low.

It is not man's physical being, or whatever has reference to that, which is the most important, but his spirit and all that relates to this. But the realm

of the spirit does not extend beyond its own self; and when the spirit speaks of a fate of which it is the author, it speaks of that which relates to itself exclusively, and not of that in which it has only a share as long as it is clad in an earthly covering. To say that the human spirit is the author of its own fate means, therefore, that it has the power to be happy, independently of outward circumstances.

It has this power, for God has endowed it with free-will, and with the requisite perceptions and strength. For the acquisition of outward means and outward happiness He has given it the capacity that is developed by experience; for the establishment of permanent inward happiness, He has given it the wisdom of Jesus. The former changes according to circumstances; the latter is unchangeable, and is ever guided by the eternal laws of God.

To these laws of the Deity belongs the rule which prevails throughout life and throughout the universe: THAT GOOD IS INVARIABLY FOLLOWED BY GOOD CONSEQUENCES, AND EVIL IS AS INVARIABLY FOLLOWED BY EVIL CONSEQUENCES, AND ULTIMATELY LEADS TO ITS OWN DESTRUCTION. Good is the will of God revealed to us through Jesus; evil is the setting aside of what is truly good, for the gratification of sensual desires.

He, therefore, who always wills and does what is right is the creator of innumerable good consequences. Every righteous action is, as it were, a useful seed which we sow in life, and which will not fail to bear blessings. We surround ourselves with the fruits of our virtuous deeds; and from the contemplation of these arises the purest pleasure, the highest happiness, — a happiness founded on self-approval.

It is possible that though enjoying this happiness we may be poor in outward possessions ; it is possible that we may even lose such earthly goods as we held until then, and this may distress us ; but our inward contentment it cannot disturb ; our former cheerfulness will soon return, for we have not allowed ourselves to be dependent on the transient things of the world. Only he that does not know himself, and know truth, only he who places his happiness in the possession of earthly comforts, can be deprived forever of his peace and cheerfulness of mind, by the ruin of his earthly well-being. There have been men who have put an end to their own life with guilty hands, because their bodies could no longer secure all the enjoyments that they most coveted.

Good invariably leads to good. And the beneficent consequences are not only evinced in the cheerfulness of our minds, — in the happy feeling that we are numbered among God's children, and that after this dream of life is over a far more blissful lot awaits us, — but sometimes they extend even to our earthly relations. The righteous man, the friend of humanity, the benefactor of the needy, the peacemaker, the meek in heart, is he not surrounded by the confidence and the love of all who know him ? If misfortunes fall upon him, what silent, hearty sympathy beams upon him from the looks of all ! How many do not wish to help him who was ever ready to help others ! And the loving, thrifty, careful mother of a family, who does not value her ? Who does not honor her virtuous life among her children, her friendly yet dignified conduct towards her domestics, her courtesy and desire to serve acquaintances and neighbors, her unassuming modesty, which

contrasts so beautifully with the vanity, and love of display, in others ?

It is God's will that what is good shall inevitably, even here below, lead to good. There is no truth, therefore, which has been more fully confirmed by experience, than that virtue is the best policy. We cannot always know what it will be most expedient to do under given circumstances ; but every man knows what it is right and noble to do under all circumstances. Our understanding is ever liable to make mistakes, but the conscience seldom errs. The will to do what is best is always in our power ; but the result is in the hand of God.

Therefore, if thou wouldst secure to thyself a happy fate, think not so much of the consequences of thy actions as of their character : their kindliness and righteousness. Thy power is limited ; thou wilt not be able to effect more than a small portion of the good which thou wouldst fain see prevailing in the world, but each one contributes according to his capacity. One planteth, another watereth ; but it is God who giveth the increase. But "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." (1 Cor. iii. 8.)

Evil, such is the Divine law, ever tends to evil, and must at last effect its own destruction. He who chooseth evil prepareth misery for himself. Do not all the experiences of life confirm the unfailing workings of this Divine rule ? Behold the ambitious man : his life is a prey to never-ending struggles and anxieties ! Behold the miser : he is dying of want on his heaps of gold ! Behold the voluptuary : his pallid cheeks, his sunken eyes, tell you of the poison that is consuming his blood and destroying his nerves ! Be-

hold the drunkard : he bears the stigma of his vice stamped upon him, and with blunted mind and senses, and tortured by disease, he hurries towards an early grave ! Behold the treacherous and malicious man : he is shunned by all, he has no friends ; he falls, and all look upon his ruin as well merited ! Behold the proud spendthrift : he is ruined, and is frequently obliged to beg assistance of those whom he used disdainfully to overlook !

Why is it that so few persons are neither quite happy nor quite unhappy ? Because they are not sufficiently depraved to give themselves entirely up to evil, yet have not courage enough always to act virtuously. They oscillate unsteadily between right and wrong, and, in consequence, between contentment and misery. The good which they do and which they love brings its reward in like manner as the evil which they think or commit brings its punishment, by making them the victims of vexatious circumstances of various kinds. If thou wouldst be *thoroughly* happy, thou must not be content with being only *partially* good.

The vicious are the authors of their own misery, of the diseases, of the anxieties, and despair, of which they are the prey. Who can deny this ? And so the righteous may, in like manner, be the authors of an indestructible peace of mind, which is the highest happiness, and of which no human power can deprive them.

But man has the capacity to do even more than this. He is not only capable of securing unvarying inward happiness by cultivating a virtuous disposition ; he is, by the wisdom of Jesus, enabled to improve his outward circumstances also, and even if

these should be very adverse, of triumphing over them. This is the highest that man can achieve on earth, and when this is accomplished, he has restored the image of God in his heart, and has raised himself above all earthly sorrows. Storms may rage around him, but he has attained a pinnacle where they cannot disturb him.

But how is he to reach this height? Not by ordinary cleverness, — not by the prudence learnt through manifold experiences, — but by the help of RELIGION; by penetrating himself with its truths, and living in accordance with them. What Jesus taught must be his thoughts. What Jesus was, he must be. Being made in the image of God, he must live in and for God only. By so doing, he will create for himself a fate that will lift him high above every earthly event.

In order to reach this divinely exalted goal, thou must accustom thyself to the thought that thy life on earth must be exclusively devoted to thy spirit; that nothing here below is truly thine own except thy immortal spirit; that thou hast to perfect thy spirit only, and that all else, rank and honors, wealth and learning, beauty and accomplishments, health and sickness, friendship and persecutions, earthly happiness and unhappiness, are only the means by which thou art to attain thy ultimate and highest object. Accustom thyself to the thought that none of the outward things which thou possessest can remain thine forever; that they are only lent to thee; that even that which thou hast earned by thy industry is perishable; that friends, parents, brother, sister, spouse, and child, have only a short time measured out to them to walk by thy side. Accustom thyself to the thought that

thy spirit, *i. e.* thy true self, is making but a short sojourn in this world, and must soon return home again ; that thou art here only on a mission from thy Heavenly Father, to carry out his will in many things, after which thou wilt be called away. Accustom thyself to the thought that God alone is thy eternal Father ; that all human spirits without exception are thy brethren ; that their bodies, their social rank, etc., are but the raiments in which they must be clad during their stay on earth.

When thou art thoroughly penetrated by these sublime thoughts, which thou wilt find pervading all the teachings of Jesus, the world will assume in thine eyes a very different aspect from that in which it has hitherto appeared to thee. Thou wilt be ashamed of letting thyself be held in subjection by the temptations and desires which spring from the nature of thy body ; thou wilt be ashamed of leaving the mission, with which God intrusted thee in this world, unfulfilled in order that thou mayst toy with the dust through which thou walkest ; thou wilt learn to distinguish realities from mere semblances ; thou wilt discern clearly that God did not send thee into this world that thou mightest learn to till fields and build houses, to fill posts of honor, or to wrap thyself in costly apparel, but to be his fellow-laborer in the work of accomplishing the true happiness of all mankind. (1 Cor. iii. 9.) Thou wilt then understand clearly the full and deep meaning of Christ's words : "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. vi. 33.) Therefore, when ye have wherewithal to feed and to clothe yourselves, be content.

Thou wilt live, not in order to heap one earthly good upon another, and at length to be torn away from thy treasures by death; but to make all those who surround thee wiser and happier in as far as in thee lies. The happiness of others will ever be thy principal object; thou wilt neither know nor desire any other felicity for thyself.

Thou wilt only smile when the malignity of some treacherous mortal deprives thee of thy wealth; he merely robs thee of the means of being useful to himself and others. Thou wilt only smile when the changes that belong to all things earthly disappoint thee as to thy social position, thy influence over others, and the consideration in which thou art held. For, after all, it is of little importance whether thou be clad in fine linen and purple, or in the coarsest garb: both will eventually perish; both are of equally small value to thy spirit. Therefore, what does it signify if thou be called prince or beggar during this short dream of life; it will neither increase nor diminish thy value in thine own eyes, nor give thee a higher or a lower standing in God's universe, or in the realm of spirits. That which thou art in thyself and before God, that thou wilt remain. Verily, He, the Most High, has no respect of persons, according to the inventions of human vanity and to the measurements of human littleness.

Thou wilt only smile when sickness lays thee prostrate. Thou wilt see in this nothing more than a disordered state of an instrument which thou knewest beforehand was very frail. Perhaps God will take it from thee in order to provide thee with a more perfect one. Perhaps God would merely remind thee not to place too much value on what is perishable.

Let it be sufficient for thee, that in the midst of thy bodily sufferings thou canst rejoice in the health of thy mind: thy soul has suffered no injury. Thou wilt be able to bear with calmness the death of those thou lovest best on earth. They had a vocation like thyself. The Divine mission on which they were sent into the world has only been completed a few days earlier than thine. They have reached the goal, and having finished their work, God will open for them a new and more glorious career: the same as will be opened for thee in future. Though their earthly coil may moulder in the earth, it was not this that thou didst love, but their soul, and this remains ever kindred and faithful to thee. It dwells in God, and if thou also wilt abide in the Lord, no separation will be possible. If such be thy thoughts and feelings, what event can disturb thy cheerfulness, thy peace of mind, or, in other words, thy true and lasting happiness? Hast thou not then been the author of thine own fate, in the highest sense of the word? Art thou not placed above the reach of every earthly storm?

Such was the bliss Thou didst enjoy on earth, O Divine Jesus! Thou didst despise what was of the world, and only didst partake of it in as far as was necessary for thy human nature and thy activity. Thou didst love all the beings that surrounded Thee, and didst call all God's children thy brethren. Thy mission on earth was to redeem a degenerate world from the fetters of sin and error, and to emancipate spirits from the thralldom of sensual desires; and this vocation thou didst keep before thine eyes in all thy doings. That the people at one moment proclaimed Thee King of Israel, and at another stoned Thee, did

not disturb thy divine serenity. Alas! erring humanity did not comprehend the sublimity of thy mission and of thy acts. Thou didst not hold it a shame to appear in the guise of a servant of all; thou didst not call it a misfortune that often Thou didst not know where to lay thy head. Earthly things had no value in thine eyes: thy life was in heaven. Thou didst bear scorn and persecution, and the shame of public degradation; but thy placid conscience lifted Thee above the foolish judgments of men. In the realm of spirits, O thou Prince of Spirits, the honor and shame that prevail are different from those conceived of by benighted, low-minded men. Thy life on earth extended over scarcely thirty-six years, but Thou didst teach men to despise death, which had no terrors for Thee. Saviour of the world, Thou didst die, but thy mission on earth was divinely accomplished.

Ah! let me live in Thee, and die in Thee! And through Thee learn to secure the highest bliss to myself! Amen.

GREATNESS OF SOUL.

Man's soul to more aspires
Than earth or heaven can yield to sense;
And God who granteth his desires
Gives him a great inheritance.
He guides his earthly course
Through time, that he may be
Led to the perfect source
Of all felicity.
Till with his powers long tried,
Strength trained, and courage high
To godly deeds applied,
For these alone he 'll sigh.

Then the hard task is done,
And all his soul is pure delight.
Henceforward God shall be his sun,
And shine on him in splendor bright.
"Perfection" is the palm
His own good angel brings,
And rapture swells the psalm
He to his Maker sings.
Eternally to reign
In glory all divine;
God-like thy course sustain,
While earth and time are thine!

(MATT. v. 44-48.)

I HAVE but too often seen man in his degradation; but when have I seen him in all his dignity?

I have but too often seen him sunk in mere animal life, solely intent on gaining his bread by his labor, or on accumulating a little more property than his neighbor, or on clothing himself in finer apparel; I have seen him indifferent to every pleasure but that

derived from his inflated self-conceit, or from the gratification of his palate at feasts and entertainments, or from the pride he took in having others under his command ; I have seen him earnestly occupied with the improvement of his earthly condition, but completely indifferent to the improvement of his heart and character, as if this were but a secondary matter ; I have seen him bent upon cultivating his mind, and upon increasing his knowledge and his skill, merely for the sake of passing through the world with honor (as he terms it), as if the exalted capacities of his soul had been bestowed upon him by the Almighty for no other purpose than that he might become the most cunning, the most skillful, the most powerful, and the most dangerous of animals ; I have seen him without shame allow himself to be governed by his caprice, and give himself up without compunction to the sway of his passions, as if it were commendable not to put any restraint upon one's self, but to give the reins to one's tendencies, instincts, and desires, so as to place one's self on a level with the animals who are not endowed with, and therefore not controlled by, a rational spirit ; I have seen him confessing religion, not from his heart, but in order to conform to custom and social propriety ; and I have seen him, in consequence, attend church, repeat prayers by rote, and go through the sacred performances, as if they were but so many parts of a ceremonial, which was all that was due to the Lord of the universe, the Ruler of destiny, the Judge of the quick and the dead ; I have seen him use the religion of Christ as a cloak for his crimes, and as a means of pacifying his conscience, by madly making himself believe that he might rely on the

atoning merits of our Lord and Saviour, and on the death of Jesus as a sacrifice for his sins, which has relieved him of all fear of condemnation and punishment.

Alas ! how deeply may man not sink. He has an insatiable craving for happiness, and yet he is never happy, because he rushes with open eyes into inevitable destruction, as though he were impelled towards it by some cruel and unseen power. This power is no other than his passions, which corrupt his soul and destroy its peace and happiness.

But where shall I find man in the fullness of his dignity, as created in the image of God ? Is it the Christian who, possessing intimate self-knowledge, is ever watching over himself, lest he fall into some error, and who exercises a control over all his mental emotions, which raises him far above the great multitude ?

It is true he is wise and worthy of reverence who is able to resist the allurements of sensual pleasures, and who, having emancipated himself from the power of the passions, such as ambition, vanity, voluptuousness, and anger, stands forth a freeman among slaves, a king among subjects ! He is worthy of reverence because no outward might can subdue him, no joy can make him lose his self-possession, no misfortune can prostrate him : he stands unshaken in the midst of storms, forcing everything to bend to him, because he remains master of his inclinations and his emotions, and never allows them to influence his decisions. He is more worthy of admiration than he who subjugates nations by the help of other nations, but who cannot conquer himself ; more worthy of admiration than the greatest of artists and scholars, who produce works at

which the world is astounded, but who are unable to establish lasting peace and happiness in their own minds.

But is self-control the highest degree of perfection which man can reach ?

Nay, were this so, then Jesus, the God-like Enlightener of the world, would not have taught or preached higher virtue than many of the sages of antiquity. Even before Jesus Christ appeared upon earth, the wisest and most virtuous of men had taught that self-knowledge and self-control are the necessary conditions of human dignity ; and, moreover, in their own noble lives they set the most touching example of these virtues, and proved that they are not above the capacity of man, but that every mortal may exercise them. They did this, and to this day the world honors the names of these truly excellent men. O Christians ! who slavishly and cowardly shrink from the performance of these heavenly duties, those men practiced these virtues, though Christ had not yet appeared in the world, and notwithstanding that they had but obscure and vague presentiments of eternity and retribution, of which we have, through Divine revelation, obtained awful but rapturous certainty. They practiced these virtues, yet they were but heathens, — and you are Christians !

But Jesus, the Exalted, brought with Him into the world the light of heavenly wisdom, and He demanded higher things of man.

He also demanded that we should seek to attain self-knowledge, and that we should probe our own hearts. He also demanded that we should practice self-control and self-abnegation, because he who does not hold his lusts and passions in check will be over-

powered by them, and cannot be a follower of Jesus. But even the heathens did this. They spared their enemies, they endeavored to make their friends happy, they abhorred the intemperance of the glutton, the drunkard, and the voluptuary, and the immoderate desires of the over-ambitious ; they despised the folly of the proud and of the miserly, the insatiable cravings of the covetous, and the meanness of the self-seeking. But all this does not constitute the special virtue of the Christian.

Jesus demanded more of man. He demanded of us that we should become LIKE UNTO GOD : He demanded the highest magnanimity of soul of which mortals are capable.

It is not enough, He said, to conquer your anger ; nay, " Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven : for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye ? Do not even the publicans [heathens] the same ? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others ? Do not even the publicans [heathens] so ? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. v. 44-48.)

Such is the mental elevation which the Heaven-sent Messiah demands of us. It is not sufficient that we exercise even such perfect self-control as will prevent our feelings and tendencies from leading us into any wrong-doing ; we must go farther, and spread blessings and well-being around us, as far as our

power extends. To be virtuous, it is not enough to exercise such control over ourselves as never to neglect or to transgress a duty : he only is virtuous who, without reference to any outward considerations, without respect of persons, does good, increases the general happiness, and confers benefits even on his enemies.

This is Christian greatness of soul ; this is the summit of earthly perfection ! The truly wise man — and only the holy follower of Jesus is truly wise — feels himself elevated above the plots and machinations and passions of common life, and seeks only to impart happiness, where others inflict injury from low selfishness. He is raised above offenses and enmities ; he does not allow himself to be prevented thereby from doing good to those who hate him. His revenge is to forgive and forget. He is elevated above the petty objects of ordinary men, whose highest endeavors are directed towards, and whose greatest happiness consists in, the attainment of some worldly advantage, some sensuous enjoyment. His highest object is to be at one with God. Ever watchful of himself, in order to keep his heart pure from evil, he does not hate those who fail, but looks upon them as what they really are ; as persons sick in mind, whose bodies oppress and govern their souls ; as madmen, whose darkened intellects have marked out a false goal for themselves, and who are mistaken in the means by which they seek to attain it. But he does not hate them ; he only pities them, and endeavors by promoting true enlightenment to diminish and to counteract the evil. He is elevated above selfishness and self-seeking. He does not strive to be the best of men in order to be the most honored ; if this were

his motive, he could no longer be so purely good. He does not do right for the sake of a higher reward ; if he did this, his virtue would no longer be virtue, but calculating selfishness. He loves virtue because it is divine. He wishes to be perfect, because his Father in heaven is perfect. He wishes to be at one with God, because his spirit emanates from God, and aspires towards the exalted source of its being.

This is the true magnanimity of heart and mind which Jesus demands of his disciples. Love and well-doing is its essence, and modest meekness its veil. It strives after the highest goal, and therefore looks upon all that is born of the earth and will return again to earth as the lowest. It feels that man's true home is in eternity, and therefore sees in this earthly life only the first step in his endless career. It honors human laws and institutions as means of securing general well-being ; but truth, justice, and goodness it places above all human rules and regulations, — unlike most mortals, who in the splendor of their own self-invented means, forget the sublime but distant object for which they are instituted. God is everything to it in this world, because God dwells in all things, and all things are in God. It loves this life, because it is existence in God ; but it recoils not from death, which is a mere transition to another mode of existence.

O Jesus, such is the religion, the revelation, which Thou didst vouchsafe to man ! Such greatness of soul is a fruit of the Christian faith. But what am I ? Nay, I cannot as yet call myself a Christian ! What faith has been mine ? I cannot say that I have held fast the Christian faith, for my religion has been a cowardly vacillation between sin and virtue, be-

tween God and mere earthly objects. O Jesus, thy holy word falls like a ray of light into my heart, and I now see more clearly the meaning of thy heavenly doctrine, — “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

Christian magnanimity of soul does not consist in total neglect and suppression of all bodily wants and desires, or in entire renunciation of all the earthly joys of life. Nay, my body is an instrument lent to me by God, through which I am to influence and work upon the world around me; and this instrument I must not hold light, nor must I neglect it. If I did this, I should deprive my spirit of the medium through which it is to effect even its own improvement. But I must never forget that the body is but a tool. When I have taken care that it shall be healthy, strong, firm, agile, and skillful in many ways, I have done for it all that is required. Its outward beauty and adornment are matters of secondary importance. I must attach no great value to these, and must take heed that strength and health be not sacrificed for their attainment. For he who handles the tool is of far more importance than the tool itself; and the Christian willingly sacrifices his body, if it be necessary for the attainment of his highest object, — universal happiness. Be it sickness, or wounds, or suffering, or death, a magnanimous Christian holds these light when there is a question of saving the higher goods, — truth, right, faith, innocence, and human happiness.

The Christian's greatness of soul does not consist in proud disdain of all life's joys; but to him that possesses such greatness, these joys are no more than a means of refreshing the body, so as to enable it to

continue its work with renewed vigor ; and he thinks it contemptible to be always hunting after sensuous pleasures, and to seek recreation when no labor has been performed. He never lets a day pass without gracing it with some good deed ; he is ready to sacrifice every pleasure, if he can thereby increase the well-being of others. It is a luxury to him to submit to privations, and even to suffering, when he can secure thereby the happiness of others.

Riches, honors, and public esteem are not valueless in his eyes, but neither are they objects which he would purchase at any price. All these advantages, which ordinary men idolize, can neither make nor mar the contentment of the Christian sage. To him they are but auxiliary means for the achievement of his great task, the good of humanity. He knows full well how little public esteem is to be relied on ; how ambiguous are marks of honor ; and that not all the gold in the world can secure lasting inward bliss. He is always ready to renounce fame, if he can thereby increase the peace and happiness of the human family. He is ever ready to sacrifice his fortune, if he can thereby diminish the sufferings of man.

That which comes from the earth he values as of the earth, and even the world's most brilliant prizes seem to him not worth a sigh. Of what importance can it be to him to renounce, a few days or a few years sooner or later, that which he knows he must eventually give up ? But when we do give it up, let it be for a noble cause. The largest sum of gold is not worth as much as the consciousness of having performed one great and God-like action, and it is less painful to sacrifice life than our inward purity.

Christian greatness of soul does not consist in refusing to defend our own rights, or those of others, when they are threatened. All rights conceded to us or to others by society are so many conditions for acquiring, practicing, and retaining the means of useful activity. He who from mistaken or malignant motives destroys these conditions, must be earnestly but gently recalled to a sense of his duty. In general, such an invader of our rights is called an enemy ; but the true Christian has no enemies. He may be despised, persecuted, or envied ; but even while defending himself and his rights, he remains the friend of his opponent. He does not shun him with displeasure, but respects him as heretofore, and assists him, and is kind to him whenever an opportunity occurs. And, finally, if no other alternative should be open to him than the hard one of either doing wrong or suffering wrong, he does not hesitate to select the latter.

For Christian greatness of soul manifests itself, above all, in never-failing love of God and love of man, — a love which no ingratitude can destroy, which makes no difference between friend and foe, and which is revealed in deeds more than in words. The Christian who has reached this sublime height endeavors at every moment of his life, and under all circumstances, to do his best, and to be as useful to others as his power and capacity will admit of. And whatever he does, he prefers to do in secret, and not before the eyes of men ; yet he does not shun publicity even, if he sees that his example may be useful in stimulating others to like conduct.

Whatever may be the position in which God's providence places him, such a Christian's wish and endeavor is to act up to his own highest ideal. In-

deed, he not only wills so to do, but he does it, for with him will and action are one. But he conceals his own worth under a veil of modesty; for what he is and what he does, he is not and does not for the sake of human approval, for the sake of winning the applause of weak mortals, who are too apt to praise even that which is no more than the duty of every upright person. A deed done for the reward of approbation it may bring deserves the contempt of the truly wise and good. Of such deeds God keeps no account. It is, on the contrary, the highest distinction of true greatness of soul to be ready to make every sacrifice for the happiness of others, though this self-immolation may never be known to mortal being. The true Christian sees no reason to doubt that others act from noble motives, though they reach not always the goal they aim at; for he knows that he himself has still to combat many weaknesses; but he feels ashamed at being commended for that which is simply the performance of his duty, and the more so as such praise proves that those who dispense it have little claim to respect. For he who thinks the mere fulfillment of duty worthy of eulogy, gives evidence that he does not attend very strictly to the performance of his own. And what value has panegyric coming from unworthy lips?

But even were shame, persecution, dungeons, and scaffolds to be the consequences of a virtuous life, virtue is its own reward; dungeons and scaffolds pass away; the soul of the righteous is free; it feels not the weight of the fetters that oppress the body. Death on the scaffold for a holy cause, or death on the field of battle, — wherein doth it differ from death on a bed of sickness? Does the pillow on

which the dying head rests make any difference to a spirit that lives in God, for God, and with God? How many noble souls, whose memory is consecrated by the tears of grateful posterity, did not give up their lives under the executioner's axe, and amid the imprecations of their contemporaries! Not what others think of us, but what we are in ourselves, ought to be of importance to us. The character of our actions, not men's judgments of them, is the thing we have to look to. The former only is our own; the latter depends upon outward circumstances. The former alone affects our dignity, influences our growth in perfection, and our happiness; the latter hardly affects even our outward circumstances. Here on earth the same oblivion soon embraces alike the murderer and the murdered. But God lives, God judges!

Thou livest, O Eternal Upholder of all things! Thou judgest, O All-righteous Judge! What is my body when dead?—A discarded garment. What is sensuous life when it is concluded?—An ever-changing dream, the events of which fade away as we awake. I am a spirit, and all else that clings to me is not mine; but of the dignity and power which my spirit has acquired through its activity on earth, it cannot be stripped by the hand of death; for such dignity and power are inherent in that only which is imperishable, immortal, and which belongs not to earth.

To strive after greatness of soul is the highest aim of a rational, God-created being; and this aim is not beyond the reach of man. For even Jesus was not only apparently a man, yet He performed the most exalted actions, to prove that to an earnest will the

greatest perfection is attainable. And, inspired by his words and his example, thousands of others have followed in his footsteps. They have resolutely, and without repining, sacrificed fortune, friendship, love, power, freedom, and life itself, for right and truth, for innocence and virtue, for their country, and for the happiness of their fellow-men. Why should I not be able to do what they have done? Why should it be impossible because thousands of other men, held in the trammels of their sensuous being, doubt that such deeds can be done, or call such actions foolish enthusiasm? What is the judgment of men sunk in sensuality and base selfishness, compared to the judgment of God in my conscience? Though they may be unable to see that that which is of the earth is but dust and ashes; though they may be incapable of sacrificing the perishable for the imperishable, this is no reason why I should be equally degenerate. O Jesus Christ! perfect and Divine Man! ensample of what spirits ought to attain to in this world! Thou in whom I behold God and nature united! Thou who art one and the same with God and nature!—hast Thou not set me an example? The world of men that surrounded Thee understood Thee not, O Holy Power of God! They looked to dust and ashes; to outward might and social relations. Thou didst smilingly spurn with thy foot the earth and its perishable concerns, holding in view only the relation between Thee and thy Father.

I will be as Thou wert, O Jesus! When an infant I was consecrated in baptism as a follower of thine, and, true to the baptismal vows made for me, I will walk in thy footsteps; I will study thy life and thy

doctrines ; I will leave naught undone to attain greatness of soul, spiritual freedom, and likeness to God ! The struggle with my sensuous desires and tendencies will often be a hard one ; but God will give me strength and courage to persevere. Amen !

THAT WHICH IS OF GOD MUST ULTIMATELY TRIUMPH.

Hark! from the deep abyss
Resounds the victory-song of highest bliss!
Of all God's sons the glorious jubilee.
Where now shall the false deities be found?
Death's terrors? All in peace lie hushed and bound,
And stilled the triumph of their mockery.
So had the rebel ones, the powers of hell,
Thus sank in deep despair, been silenced never,
But power Divine, which every foe can quell,
O'er the destroyers has prevailed forever.

Higher, and yet still higher,
Devotion, let thine altar-flames aspire!
He from the darkness of the tomb is risen;
He lent his body to the dust to save
His holy ones, and sanctify the grave.
And now the chains of death for aye are riven.
Henceforth, ye graves, 'neath angels' watching laid,
The resurrection's seed your bounds contain, —
What is divine, what God hath holy made,
Victorious over all, in life shall reign.

(MATT. xxviii. 11-16.)

SOMETIMES when I reflect on the noble life of Jesus, I ask myself, But how is it possible that all the world should not have loved this heavenly character whose heart was so full of love for all? Why did his contemporaries persecute Him, when even his judges feared to condemn Him? What evil had He done? He taught peace and concord, and self-denial and entire devotion to the will of God, that is, to all that is virtuous and good. He lived a life of extreme humility, and envied not the great,

transgressed no law of the land ; giving joy to others, healing the sick, comforting the sorrowing, and restoring the lost happiness of many families, He walked almost joyless through a world which misjudged Him to the very last.

How is it possible that he who was so simple and true could be misjudged ? What was his crime, that his fellow-citizens, or at least by far the greater number of them, should persecute Him even unto death ?

If Jesus, the Messiah, had appeared in our day ; if he had lived and taught in the midst of us, would scorn, disdain, and persecution have been his reward, as it was in those days ?

I would fain answer, nay ; so inhuman, so barbarous, so utterly unfeeling the present generation is not ; nay, such injustice our judges, our rulers, could not allow to be done by others, and still less could they be guilty of it themselves.

I would fain speak thus. But then, when I consider that man has, at all times and among all nations, ever shown himself the same as regards his violent and selfish passions ; when I call to mind the murders and other terrible deeds which we have witnessed even in our own day ; when I recollect how ¹ thousands of innocent victims of the highest rank, as well as of the lowest, have been dragged to the scaffold on mere suspicion, or on account of their opinions only, I shudder, and am forced to confess, that even among us, in the present day, Jesus the sinless would not be secure. Among us also He would find sanguinary persecutors, traitors, merciless accusers, and judges who desecrate justice by holding a human life in small account, if they consider it their interest

¹ During the French Revolution.

to sacrifice it. Nay, my Jesus, even amongst us Thou wouldst not have been safe; and the very persons who now kneel before Thee in temples which they have reared to Thee, and who pray to Thee with fervor, because they tremble before Thee as the Judge of the world, would attack Thee as an enthusiast or a revolutionist, as a blasphemer and heretic, as an enemy of the existing state of things, a fearful innovator, wert Thou to appear amongst us in thy unpretending simplicity, full of the Divine Spirit in word and action, but in the lowly garb of one of the humble classes of the people. For as of yore, so to-day, mortals judge according to appearances. And as of yore, so to-day, unbending pride and all-sacrificing selfishness wage war against everything that is opposed to their interests.

I cannot, therefore, extol the present times above those in which the Saviour lived. I am forced to confess, with failing heart, that on the day of judgment the voice may be heard addressing us also, and saying, "I have been among you, and you refused to acknowledge me; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; I was naked, and ye clothed me not; I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me not." And many of our number will cry as the men spoken of in the Gospel, "Lord, when saw we Thee?" And He will answer and say, "Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." (Matt. xxv. 33-45.)

Yea, even in this day Christ is among us, and we know Him not. Animated by his benevolent spirit, many a friend of humanity endeavors to promote what is good, but is slandered and persecuted because what he proposes is in opposition to the worldly in-

terests of some mighty personage. Animated by the spirit of Jesus, many a wise man seeks to establish truth and justice upon earth, but he is railed at as an impudent innovator and reformer, because others fear that his teachings will lower the consideration in which they themselves are held. Animated by the spirit of Jesus, many a virtuous man is willing to sacrifice himself for the common welfare, but the selfish world calls his noble disinterestedness foolish enthusiasm, or hypocritical craftiness, and refuses to believe that a man of humble origin, of small means, and in lowly garb, is capable of more sublime acts than the high and mighty.

In like manner the greater number of benefactors of mankind have from the earliest ages ever been despised and disowned by the generation among which they lived: they were objects of scorn or abomination to the great and learned filled with pharisaical conceit, or to the blind multitude sunk in ignorance; chains and dungeons have been their lot, the cup of poison or the martyr's stake their reward.

For those who wisely and earnestly, and full of God-like zeal, declare war against the crimes and vices of common life, convert the sinful world into an implacable enemy. Those who in mental power and insight are far in advance of their times, and who endeavor to lift up poor degraded humanity to their own level, are not understood, but are misjudged and slandered. Those who would banish from the world all wrong-doing and injustice, must expect to be objects of vengeance to those who live by the spoils of iniquity. The industrious hand that would clear the garden of the Lord of hurtful weeds, must expect to be stung and wounded by the nettles and the thorns which it endeavors to uproot.

In proportion to the depression which these reflections must cause to a pious mind, that delights in all excellence, must be the quickening and soul-elevating consolation afforded by the great event, the commemoration of which we celebrate on Easter Sunday.

Jesus Messiah was dead ! His friends, dispersed and discouraged, wept in secret the tears of unconquerable grief. But the spirit of hell rejoiced, for the Messiah was no more. The scribes and the Pharisees looked down triumphantly from the altitude of their pride, for He whom they had so much feared had bled to death on the cross ; his holy heart had ceased to beat. He lay buried in the rocky cavern, a prey to corruption. Even his ashes they would not give up to those that loved him ; and a great stone was therefore rolled before the entrance to the grave-vault, and it was furthermore sealed up.

But, to their terror and surprise, an earthquake shook the proud palaces of Jerusalem and opened the graves. Jesus the Messiah was no longer to be found in the vault of the dead : He walked openly through the land, and appeared before his beloved ones. Trembling with fear, the soldiers who had been set to watch the body and the tomb, the stone and the seals, fled into the holy city. Levites and high-priests heard the wonderful tidings. Their pride refused to believe, and they denied it.

But in vain was their denial. They held counsel with the elders of the city. In vain ; for what can the councils of men effect against the judgments of God ? They gave the soldiers money, that they might say that his disciples had come in the night and stolen the body while they slept. In vain ; the dumb stones spoke. The witnesses spoke, who had

met him after he had risen from the dead. The miracles wrought on earth spoke; the action of heaven through the entire history of the world gave evidence. Christ had arisen. The disciples saw Him, took courage again, and believed. Filled with a high and holy joy, they visited all parts of the earth and preached the doctrine of Him who had risen from the dead. The symbol of his ignominious death on Golgotha became the sign of the triumph of the Church universal. Kings and peoples worshiped the exalted One, and his name became their highest glory, and Jesus' words of redemption sounded through the high places of the world, through the burning deserts of the South, through the ice-fields of the North, and reached far distant realms, and islands beyond the vast world-ocean.

In vain does the power of man struggle against that which comes from God. **THAT WHICH IS DIVINE CAN NEVER BE DESTROYED.** Though it may for a time be suppressed, be of good cheer; it will triumph at last. The grave itself will become a monument of glory, and the instruments of torture will become trophies of victory.

Therefore, be of good cheer, O ye of little faith, who venture into the turmoil of the world full of virtuous resolutions, but who soon retire trembling before the storm of envy, before the scornful laughter of the sinful, before the anger of roused selfishness; and who, though desirous of acting nobly, are equally desirous of not displeasing your fellow-men. No man can serve two masters! If thou hast commended thy concerns to Heaven, what hast thou to demand of the world? If thou wouldst serve the cause of God, what is to thee the hatred of the enemies of virtue?

Take courage, O noble and virtuous man, who, led by holy convictions, wouldst fain do good and improve the condition and happiness of the human race. Complete thy work ; hope for the encouraging blessing of a few noble-minded men only, while the great multitude will hoot at thee, and in its ignorance and selfishness will persecute thee with hatred. And shouldst thou fall, — shouldst thou become the victim of malignant opponents, — what wilt thou have lost ? Thy earthly happiness may be destroyed, but not the great ideas for which thou didst sacrifice the comforts and pleasures of life. Thy blood may flow at the hands of murderers, but thy spirit will soar triumphantly above the world. Champion of virtue, give up thyself, but not the holy cause of humanity, not that which is divine in thy convictions. These cannot be destroyed, for God upholds them !

That which is divine cannot be extinguished ! It will have to struggle against the hostile influences of this world, but it will triumph at last.

We learn this from the wonderful event which every Christian joyfully commemorates on Easter Sunday ; and we learn it from many scarcely less wonderful events in the world's history. This fact is the most exalted and most indubitable proof which we have that a Divine Providence rules above.

TRUTH is Divine. For God is the Spirit of truth. And never has a truth perished out of the world, however violently, however long, the nations or their rulers may have struggled against it. It has ever risen above the power of every obstruction, and, though perhaps after long ages of combat, has finally triumphed all the more gloriously.

Every new truth is more or less in conflict with the

cherished objects and the deep-rooted prejudices of certain classes, or at all events with their received opinions and established customs. It has therefore to sustain a hard struggle against the circumstances of the times. It is a lump of leaven, which causes the whole mass to ferment in secret. But this very fermentation is a precursor of the inevitable victory; it is a dissolving and separating of that which has grown old and useless, to make way for that which is newer and better. Truth triumphs, though often above the graves of those who first proclaimed and defended it.

Therefore tremble not before the power of earthly tyrants, who, fearing the light, would fain continue to reign in darkness, and in consequence, prepare exile, prisons, and scaffolds for the witnesses of truth. That which is spiritual cannot be destroyed with earthly weapons. Fear may for a time lame all tongues; but no power can stay the silent activity of the mind. No mortal, even were all the crowns of the earth gathered on his head, rules the spiritual world: there God's sceptre alone holds sway! Herod once in cruel madness ordered all the children in Bethlehem to be murdered; and yet to this day, two thousand years after the event, a redeemed world celebrates the triumph of the truths taught by the Child of Bethlehem, whose death the wicked king tried to compass. High-priests and scribes defended with the utmost fury the laws of Moses and the traditional reverence of the people for the sacred places of Jerusalem, against the preachers of the Gospel; but Jerusalem and her temples were reduced to ruins, and the followers of Moses were dispersed through the world, and the Gospel of Jesus has become the pride of the most civilized portion of the human race.

Full of indignation against eternal truth, the priests of the heathen deities struggled valiantly against the first followers of Jesus. The Roman emperors proceeded with ruthless fury against the contemners of the old-established national religion, and the false altars. In vain. These altars were dashed to pieces; the power of Rome, before which the world had trembled, was laid prostrate in the dust; and above the graves of the murdered disciples of Jesus rose the temples of the ONE true God.

That which is Divine cannot perish; and Divine is the innocence and righteousness of every virtuous man. For God is the Father of righteousness, the holiest of Beings.

The short-sightedness and passionate impulsiveness of men render it impossible for them at all times and at once to recognize the full value of what is right and good. As each man has experiences and views different from those of others, and as it is in accordance with these that he judges what he sees, he generally pronounces that false, erroneous, and bad which does not harmonize with his previous notions. When to this is added the melancholy tendency in human nature to be more prone to believe evil of others than good, it is easy to understand how even the most righteous men come to be misjudged, and how the innocent become objects of calumny, and of the most unmerited hatred.

Unfortunately, the virtue of commonplace persons is rarely strong enough to resist unexpected storms. They cannot bear persecution even for the sake of a righteous cause. Their hearts are either filled with cowardice, and they desert the good cause in order not to lose the favor of impotent man, and thus re-

nounce virtue in order not to renounce their comforts; or they fall into the opposite error, of hating, and bitterly despising their fellow-men. Thus many have by their uncalled-for violence and passionate temperament placed impediments in the way of the good they sought to promote, and which others opposed out of narrow-minded ignorance. Thus many a good man, who would willingly have sacrificed himself for virtue, had his honest intentions but been recognized by others, has become discouraged and indifferent, or, despairing of convincing his narrow-hearted and selfish neighbors of the excellence of the object he held in view, he has sunk down to the level of those whom formerly he despised with full right.

But this is not the mode of action of the true Christian, who walks in the path of the great Teacher, whose example is ever before him. He does not forget what Jesus, the righteous, bore for the sake of righteousness. He does not forget that his Master voluntarily suffered death to promote the welfare of mankind, and how other great and good men, filled with the spirit of Jesus, followed in his footsteps. He does not forget that perseverance leads to success, and that what is right, and truly good, and divine, can never perish. He does not forget the words which Jesus has left as an encouragement to those who would follow Him in the thorny path of self-sacrifice for the welfare of others: "Fear not those who can only kill the body!" Indeed, what is life compared to the triumph of virtue? To die for the good of mankind is a far more desirable fate than that of living a few short days longer, with the consciousness and shame of having acted like a coward.

That which is of God can never perish! Defy all

threats and tortures, O ye righteous ones, whom the world condemns, and rejoice in your sublime calling to suffer for virtue. Ye are walking in the thorny but glorious path of Jesus. Not to every one was this happiness given by the combination of circumstances and events. However bitterly the evil-disposed may rail against you, your innocence is a heavenly shield which will turn off every barb aimed at your hearts. Fight out the battle to the last, shielded by your innocence, and keeping your eyes fixed on God in heaven, and you will win the crown of eternal life and glory. By acting thus I will prove myself thy disciple, O Jesus, Thou who hast risen from the dead. Thy life shall be my mirror, thy death my salvation, and thy resurrection shall be to me a sign of the imperishable nature of all that comes from God. Should I renounce virtue because of poverty, or of the scorn and hatred of the evil-minded! Ah, no! even poverty and scorn are not so bitter as death. But should I, even to avoid death, renounce the cause of virtue? Nay; because virtue, that which is divine, is eternal, and my spirit also is eternal. My spirit also comes from God, partakes of the Divine nature, and cannot perish.

Yea, I also shall rise from the dead; my spirit also shall one day, when the veil of dust is rent in which God has clothed it, go forth to greater glory; and if it has remained worthy of its exalted origin, the hand of God will array it in a new and more glorious garb.

Son of the Eternal, Thou didst rise triumphantly above the grave and above earthly death. I also, a child like Thee of the Eternal Father, shall one day rise victoriously above my lifeless corpse. And while

the tears of my earthly kindred fall upon the deserted clay, my enraptured spirit will soar towards my heavenly kindred, to celebrate more worthily with them the triumph of the Divine in the universe.

Father, mother, why stand ye so pale and full of lamentations by the bier of your beloved child? Has Christ not risen? Can the Divine principle perish which once animated the dust above which ye now sorrow so bitterly? Pious daughter, noble son, why grieve so unceasingly for your departed father, your tender mother? Why weep because that which is Divine returns triumphantly into the bosom of the Deity? In like manner Jesus, having completed his task in life, returned to the heavenly abodes. In like manner the Divine spark in thee will, perhaps sooner than thou dost expect, return to the source of all blessedness.

Every righteous endeavor here below is a triumph of that which is heavenly over that which is earthly; is an exchange of earthly thralldom for heavenly freedom; is a victory of life over death.

Did not the disciples of Jesus cease to weep when they found his rock tomb open, and beheld their Master again wonderfully transfigured? When they saw Him again for one brief moment only, as in a dream, after which He disappeared from among them, because his work was done? Disconsolate parents, orphans, husbands, wives, and friends, those for whom ye weep no longer sleep in the tomb. The Lord of life hath called them back into his bosom, in order to render still more perfect the bliss you will experience in the hour of death, when you have completed your virtuous career on earth. Would you not suffer more painfully when taking your last farewell of this world

if you had to leave behind you those you so dearly loved ?

Jesus, Thou hast risen from the dead, and Thou art my light and my comfort. Thy victory is my victory ; thy death is my immortality ; thy resurrection my triumph.

MEDITATIONS
ON
DEATH AND ETERNITY.

MEDITATIONS.

IS SLOW DECLINE OR SUDDEN DEATH MOST DESIRABLE ?

Saviour! by thy death-wound's power,
Strengthen me, when that blest hour,
Which weigheth crowns of victory,
To my death-bed draweth nigh.

Then peace, with soft and silent wing,
Round my couch thy shadow fling.
Ghost of my sins! avoid the bed
Where I, dying, rest my head,
While the fading life-light pales
As my quivering eyesight fails.

Come, my angel, from God's throne,
Bring me my celestial crown;
Then waft me, with thy waving palm,
To heavenly joys, and angel calm.

(MATT. vii. 20, 21.)

WHAT a painful shock do we not all experience at the intelligence of the sudden death of a friend, or even of a mere acquaintance, whom we may have seen and spoken to but a few hours or a few days before, and whom we believe to be in good health! We are struck with terror; we find it difficult to realize the fact; it seems to us incomprehensible, impossible; it is as though we had expected that God, the Ruler of life and death, would, in regard to us and all that concerns us in this world, have made a merciful exception to the general course of things.

But what is it that terrifies us? It seems to us dreadful that a human being should, unexpectedly and without any preparation, be torn from amid all his plans and projects, and be ushered into another world. We at once picture to ourselves in imagination our own soul in the place of that of the departed person, and feel the silent awe with which it must be seized at the mighty change that has been wrought in the course of a few seconds, when it finds itself, without any forewarning, drifting away from its common occupations into the unknown world beyond the grave. We shudder at such parting without leave-taking, without the last pressure of the hand of affection.

Different are the impressions produced by the spectacle of the slow extinction of one whose illness can only end in death. It is true, that in such case we are better prepared for the loss we are to sustain; but, nevertheless, the slightest sign of improvement revives our hope that the malady will not prove fatal, and the dearer to us the person who seems about to depart, the more willingly, the more fervently, do we give ourselves up to hope. And when death does ensue, our grief is not the less poignant because we might have been prepared for all that was to come. It is true that the sufferings of the sick are seldom as intense as our heated and self-torturing imaginations depict them to us; but who can watch the formerly so blooming, and now so emaciated form, the pale cheek and sunken eye, without being moved with deep pity? Who can listen to his groans and sighs, to the quick, feeble, or heavy breathing, without wishing that a merciful God would soon put an end to this state, and give the sufferer rest in that sleep of death which is, after all, inevitable?

Thus we are terrified by sudden death, while we are pained by the spectacle of slow decline.

But which of these would be the most desirable, if wishing could be of any avail, when the goal of every hope and every desire has been irrevocably fixed? Is sudden or slow death to be preferred?

This is a question which at first sight, indeed, seems idle, as our opinions can have no effect upon that which must and will take place. But nevertheless the subject has great attractions for every mind, and to meditate upon it cannot fail to be instructive and consolatory, if it tend to destroy the many prejudices which are entertained in regard to it.

For instance, are there not many mortals who look upon sudden death as the greatest of evils, because they believe that whosoever is thus stricken down is carried away in the midst of sins, which he has not had time to repent of, to eternal damnation? Are there not many who for this reason in particular pray to God to deliver them from sudden death?

But such belief can hardly be other than the fruit of superstition and of an unworthy conception of the greatness and justice of God. For if sudden death were in reality the greatest of evils, how could God — whose children we *all* are, to whose grace and mercy we *all* lay claim — favor some human beings in this most important matter (if it be really so), and not others? When an earthquake or a flood suddenly destroys with one swoop hundreds of lives, are there not likely to be among the number as many virtuous and upright men as there are deep-dyed sinners? If sudden death were the direst of misfortunes, would not an all-merciful God in distributing it exercise some discrimination? What have

the millions who breathe out their lives slowly on a bed of sickness done to deserve their being thus favored?

We may indeed say to ourselves, — On the bed of sickness the evil-doer has time to repent of his sins, and to turn anew to God. But are we not all sinners? And if repentance, brought about by the fear of death, can set everything right again, would it not be opposed to the Divine love of God, which embraces all alike with fatherly tenderness, if He were to deny this happiness to many thousands while He granted it to others? Would even an earthly father, a human mother, exercise such injustice towards their children? No; your conceptions of the highest of all beings are faulty, because you entertain erroneous views of the value of death-bed repentance. When a criminal in his prison cell, full of fear of the coming punishment, repents of his misdeeds, would you at once place him in moral worth on a level with the most pious and virtuous of men? If a child, who has long caused you sorrow by its disobedience and manifold naughtinesses, perceiving that you are at last determined to put a stop to the evil and to carry out the threatened punishment, burst into tears and repent because of its fear of chastisement, would you reward it in the same way, bestow upon it the same pleasures, as upon the docile, industrious child, who, looking up to you with tender love, has always obeyed your will? Your sense of justice would recoil from this. Then how can you suppose the All-Just One to be less just than you would be? How can repentance, born of the terror of the moment, be of the same value as a life virtuous throughout? Christ himself has, with deep earnestness, warned us against

this error. Neither tears, nor words, nor prayers, will avail, but *deeds, works of penitence!* “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them!” Saith the Lord, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, *but those who do the will of my Father which is in heaven!*” (Matt. vii. 20, 21.)

Sudden death is not, therefore, to be feared as the greatest of misfortunes, because it deprives us of the opportunity and of the time necessary to express our repentance and to utter a few prayers. The Divine Son did not teach, Repent at the hour of death; but He said, “Whoever takes up my cross during his lifetime, and follows me, he is my disciple!” “Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.” But such perfection cannot be attained when sickness has worn down our strength, but only by persevering struggles against our sensual desires, by self-consecration according to the words and spirit of Jesus.

If, then, it be blameworthy to *fear* sudden death for the reasons assigned, it is no doubt equally blameworthy to *wish* for it from sheer cowardice. For, in reality, what can it be but cowardice or fear of the sufferings of a deadly malady, and the approach of death itself, that makes so many wish to be carried off as quickly as possible, when their time shall come? To *live* to endure adversity requires greater courage than at once to seek death. Of all the circumstances that dishonor the suicide, there is none that adds so much to the baseness of his dastardly deed as his dread of life. For this reason it was that Divine wisdom implanted so deeply in the breast of man the love of life and the fear of death,—that the weak and timid race, overwhelmed by its earthly trials,

might not fly too soon to seek refuge in the grave. Those trials and sufferings were necessary to turn away the mind from sensual objects, and to lift it up and make it grasp higher ones ; but the love of life was not the less necessary. Without these fetters, large countries would often have been converted into deserts, and the ends of God and the destiny of man would have remained unfulfilled.

The wise man will see the same reasons for deeming a slow as a rapid death desirable ; but he will never see cause to fear either. For he knows the Lord that created him ; he knows the voice of the Lord, who speaks to us even in the hour of death, saying, " Fear not ; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name ; thou art mine." (Isaiah xliii. 1.)

Fear not death, whether it come early or late ; whether it come slowly, through the exhaustion of illness, or the decay of age ; or suddenly, in the strength and enjoyment of life, or on the field of battle, or by some extraordinary and unforeseen occurrence. For thou mayst indeed look forward to death, as at night we look forward to sleep ; but thou wilt not know when it comes, as little as thou art conscious of the exact moment when thou sinkest into sleep. They who shall see thee die will be conscious of it, and shudder. They shudder because the love of life, with which God has inspired all creatures, recoils from that which is parting from life. But thou wilt as little see thyself die as thou hast ever seen thyself fall asleep. Thou seest not the film gathering over thine eyes, thou art not alarmed at the increasing pallor of thy face, at the coldness of thy limbs, which fill the imagination of those who surround thee with dismal images.

Fear not thy dissolution, for thou knowest who has redeemed thee: it is Christ Jesus who has shown thee the way to heaven, and who has revealed to thee the will of the Father; by doing which faithfully thy spirit will be ennobled and rendered worthy of entering into a realm of glory. Thou knowest, when thine hour cometh, who it is that has called thee by thy name, and has said, "Thou art mine!" It is the almighty, the all-loving Father, who has created thee, who has singled thee out, not for eternal suffering and destruction, but for eternal bliss.

Fear not then, even shouldst thine end be rapid. Constant and exaggerated terror of death is not only unworthy of a Christian, but even of a heathen; for this useless self-torture is in itself more painful than death can ever be. It wears out the spirit, deprives us of all capacity for joy, — which is in reality the true supporter of health and life, — weakens the body, and hastens the approach of death, while we are endeavoring to flee from it. It is well known that fear is one of the most dangerous poisoners of life. Fear is in itself deadly, life-consuming. He who is ever dreading death dies a thousand times, and suffers each day of his life, while when death is really at hand he will not be conscious of its coming.

Therefore, cheer up, divert thy mind, occupy thy fancy with other images; for it is only thy diseased imagination that conjures up before thee these dismal shadows, not thy rational conviction. Try to turn aside thy thoughts, which are so prone to cling to this painful subject, because thou hast too often led them in this direction. Every cheerful hour that thou enjoyest is a healing draught, and adds to the length of thy days.

Fear not death, should it even be thy lot to die suddenly. Who knows what his end may be? Who can in any way foretell whether he may not be cut off by a fire, by the falling of a tile from a roof, by a cannon-ball, by an attack of apoplexy, or by some other untoward accident? Therefore, prepare thy house, keep thy domestic affairs, thy worldly concerns, in order, so that, if thou be called away suddenly from the midst of thy friends, everything shall be found after thy dissolution arranged with such perfect care, that there shall be no neglected parts, no confusion. The praise of the living will follow thee; the blessings of thy loved ones will reach thee in the eternal abodes; thou wilt have fulfilled one of the most sacred duties towards those who are bound to thee by the ties of blood. We may always take it for granted, that he who kept his domestic affairs in order was found prepared in those more important matters also that lay between him and God. Live and act each day so that after thy death, were it even to take place the next minute, thy family shall not be left in want, and no blame shall attach to thy name. For the good name of the departed must ever be the most blessed inheritance to those he leaves behind. Arrange thy affairs so that they may at any moment be laid before the eyes of strangers, as is always more or less the case after our demise.

Prepare thy house! If thou leadest at all times a life of piety, innocence, benevolence, full of active well-doing, and free from hatred or anger, such as Jesus thy Saviour taught thee, then sudden death can only be to thee a sudden benefit. Why shouldst thou dread to appear before God? Art thou not ever in his presence? Hast thou not been, even from thy

birth, one of his children, whom He holds in his arms, whom He watches over and protects? True, thou tremblest before his judgment. He knows thy shortcomings; but He knows also thy earnest efforts to correct them. He sees also the honest fight which, in order to be worthy of Him, thou fightest against the temptations to sin; He sees how often thou hast resisted and overcome thy tendencies to avarice or sensual enjoyment; He witnesses thy endeavors to make amends for every fault by noble actions. Ought a child to fear to appear before its loving parent, even though it have not yet conquered all its faults? Has not Jesus revealed to us the infinite mercy of the Father in all its beauty? Has He not given us assurances of his grace and his forgiveness?

He who ever walks before the Omnipresent in the loving spirit of Jesus, he need not tremble before the Omnipresent; and to him sudden death is but an unexpected benefaction. Such rapid passing away deprives death of its sharpest pangs: the sight of the weeping loved ones that surround us, the thought of the sorrow of those who are absent, which render so difficult our inevitable departure from this world. For to a loving heart, what bitterer grief can death bring than this? Who could behold without deep pain the affliction of those he is about to leave? Who could remain unmoved, when they draw nigh to stretch forth for the last time the hand of faithful love? Who could remain untouched, when they surround the death-bed with mournful lamentations?

Even the many solemn preparations for the possible occurrence of our demise, the anxious listening and watching of our dear ones, and the many other

distressing circumstances which generally surround the dying, add to the agony of these last moments. Therefore, God often sends to his children sudden death. He relieves them from the afflicting necessity of witnessing the fruitless, and sometimes immoderate, grief of those who remain behind.

Death itself, the falling asleep, has no bitterness. It is not a suffering, it cannot be so, for *it is the end of all suffering*, in which pain must already have ceased. It is the sickness alone which is distressing; but sickness is not death, it only slowly introduces the latter. He whom God calls suddenly from this world is even spared the trials of a bed of illness. He dies without having tasted of death. Between his earthly and his heavenly life scarce a moment intervenes. Without care, without fear, without pain, he passes from this life into a better and higher existence, like one who passes from dreaming to waking. He knows nothing of the struggle between death and the instinctive love of life; in him there is no longing to remain with his loved ones, no repining for what he is about to leave, no anxious looking forward to what awaits him.

No, I do not look upon sudden death as a punishment of God, but as one of his sweetest boons. Thus He called unto himself an Elias and an Enoch.

How could that be an evil, O Thou, the All-good! that cometh from thy hand? Lord of the seraph and of the worm, Ruler of life and death, I am in thy hand; do unto me as Thou deemest fit; for what Thou dost is well done. When Thou didst call me from nothing into life, Thou didst will my happiness; when Thou callest me away from life, will my happi-

ness be less thy care? No, no, Thou art Love, and whosoever dwells in love, dwells in Thee, O Lord, and Thou in him. Thou, Lord, art my light and my salvation ; why should I tremble ? Thou art the Lord of my life ; what should I dread ?

FEAR OF DEATH.

PART I.

It is fulfilled! once — to the cross fast bound,
His bitterest hour past — the Saviour cried,
His flesh transpierced with wounds, his head thorn-crowned,
Cried He to Him in whom He could confide;
Nor vainly cried He, for the hour drew nigh
That ended all his mortal agony.

It is fulfilled! Though yet a short delay,
I also once must cry, and that ere long;
Then shall I go where tears are wiped away,
Where sickness cometh never more, nor wrong:
The heart that's filled with love and trusting faith
Knows what it still may hope for, e'en in death.

(2 COR. v. 1-5.)

IF we mortals could foresee from our cradle all the events and sufferings that await us, many would tremble more at life than at the closing act of it which we call death.

Life has often been metaphorically represented as a journey begun without our willing it, and ended without our willing it. On we speed with restless haste. We set out in the dim dawn of morning, emerging from the unknown depths of night, and hurrying towards another night. From beginning to end it is the work of God.

Minutes vanish, hours fly past us: fain would we linger among the first flowers that smile to us in the rosy morn of youth! But a hidden power urges us on, the flowers fall withered from our hand, the hot

midday sun of life is already glowing above our heads. We discover shady spots, whose refreshing shelter invites us to repose; and gladly would we rest. But no! we must speed on. We endeavor in vain to hold fast the joys we find by the wayside. They escape. Already the sunset reddens the sky, and behind the lurid glare night is stealthily approaching. Willingly would we pause to enjoy, in longer draughts, the coolness of the lovely evening. But onwards! onwards! cries an unknown voice. We cling in vain to the objects we meet, to stay the speed of our progress. It is but a futile effort; they are carried along with us down the rapid stream. The colors of the sunset fade; darkness envelops all things; light is extinguished; earth vanishes; our senses rest; the journey is accomplished. We are surrounded by night; men have forgotten us.

Such is our lot. We all know it. You do not shudder at the night from which you have emerged into this life, — why should you shudder at the night into which you are to pass? Are these wonderful transformations of existence your own work? No; they are the unalterable consequences of the wise laws of a Higher Power.

What, then, is that which we call to die? To go out like a light, and in a sweet trance to forget ourselves and all the passing phenomena of the day, as we forget the phantoms of a fleeting dream; to form, as in a dream, new connections with God's world; to enter into a more exalted sphere, and to make a new step up man's graduated ascent of creation.

We know naught of the world beyond this; nor can it be revealed or expressed to mortal man, because it exceeds all his previous experiences, and he

lacks the senses wherewith to comprehend it. How could you explain to one born blind the feeling of delight awakened in you by the contemplation of a beautiful form, or by the spectacle of early morn in spring among flowers? If the soul of an animal should ever be clad in human form, and with this should receive the light of reason, would this new human soul, do you think, long to return to its first animal state, when in dull monotony it could only brood over the present as it passed by, and know of naught but what was immediately before it?

Why, then, do we fear death, which is but the certain transition to a better state? Why do we, when we think of dissolution, treasure more highly our existence as it is; although there are but few among us who, if they had the choice, would care to live their life over again, with its many hours of suffering, its follies and its self-torturings, unless they might be allowed to introduce some changes?

There are two sources from whence spring the fear of death, which more especially deserve our attention.

1. The Deity himself has intimately interwoven with our whole being an instinctive love of life. Hence the general revolt of our nature against dissolution in all its forms.

Were it not for this strong and almost unconquerable love of life, were it not for this natural shrinking from death, the earth would already now be a depopulated desert. Man has to encounter in this world numberless dangers, which would long ago have destroyed him, had not the love of life given him courage to resist them, and had not this courage, in its turn, given him the power to conquer them: To many a man his self-inflicted sufferings, or even his

blind fear of misfortune, soon render life intolerable, and he would sink down before he had attained the goal of his journey, did not his dread of the dark mystery of the grave make him gird himself up, and reconcile him to the labors of the day. Already, dark despair with dim-eyed frenzy approaches the brink of the abyss, and resolves upon passing over into the quiet land of death; but life puts on new smiles, and hope, which ever accompanies it, plucks the dagger from the upraised hand. It is the DIVINE WILL that we should live to ripen for a higher destiny; therefore have we been bound to life by the tenderest yet strongest ties.

Without this passionate love of life, the continuation of our existence after death would be indifferent to us, and we should never earnestly set about preparing ourselves for higher perfection. But the passion for life is implanted in us, and with it follows the desire for continued existence even after the change in death. And to the hope of eternity is joined the feeling of the necessity of rendering ourselves worthy of a higher life hereafter.

Thus this inborn love, this instinctive clinging to life, becomes to us a Divine revelation of the continuance of our existence after death. And not only has the Christian received this spirit-stirring revelation through Christ Jesus, but to all nations of the earth it has been vouchsafed.

The wildest savage who roams the woods in still undiscovered lands looks with the same joyous hope towards eternity as did the sage of antiquity.

But man errs grossly when he allows this instinctive love to degenerate into an unnatural and tormenting passion for life, which leads him to entertain an

unreasonable fear of death, and to place an exaggerated value upon existence here on earth.

In many cases it is only a morbid state of the body which causes us to surround death in imagination with shadowy terrors,—a tendency to melancholy, which, when permitted to gain ground, harasses us with a constant and blind dread of dissolution. Not the real change which takes place in death, but the false images of it which float before the imagination, are calculated to awaken terror; and these man has himself created for his own torment.

This distressing tendency of mind is frequently nothing more than the result of a too sedentary life, and the consequent thickening of the humors of the body, and the obstruction by these of the delicate play of the nerves. It may sometimes be more readily overcome by exercise, work, and amusement, than by the best-founded consolatory arguments. The condition of a person who is in constant dread of illness, or of death, is very sad, and it would be advisable to consign him to the care of a skillful physician.

We ought never, either to ourselves or to others, to depict death and the grave in more sombre colors than in reality belong to either. Gloomy images of this kind only serve to disturb the imagination, and they exercise a baneful influence over weak minds.

The dying are as little conscious of the transition from life to death as the weary are aware of the transition from the waking to the sleeping state. We have known many persons who on the last bed of sickness have awaited with full consciousness the moment of dissolution, and have even predicted it. Their imaginations had not been previously excited,

they fell asleep smiling and without a fear, as should every Christian who believes in God, and who treasures up in a pious heart a full trust in his infinite goodness. That change which the spectator who stands by the bedside sees in the face of the dying, they see not themselves. Illness may be painful; its cessation cannot be so.

When we shudder at the sight of the lifeless corpse, which lies before us cold and stiff, pale and breathless, having no sympathy with our feelings, no pity for our tears, as though it had never belonged to us, and never known us, this shudder is caused by self-deception only. If we look narrowly into ourselves at such times, we shall find that we pity the dead for all he has lost. But *he* knows of no loss. We picture to ourselves how tenderly he loved us, how he would fain have remained with us, how he has been separated from us by an unknown hand, and how vainly we sought to keep him back. But the dead knows naught of this, and even in his last days and hours these sad thoughts and feelings were far less vividly present to him than they are generally to persons in health. He has vanished from the realm of this life, and has left to us his ashes, his earthly raiment, this icy statue, which we loved when it was animated by the soul, but which never belonged to him, and which will now return to the elements out of which it was gradually built up.

Not to death itself belongs terror, but to the fancies we connect with it. Carry your mind away from these to the simple fact, and it will lose most of its gloom in your eyes.

Another unnatural deviation from the instinctive love of life that God has implanted in us, is the pas-

sionate clinging to life which many persons evince, and the undue value which they attach to it. Life has no value except in as far as we use it for perfecting our souls, for enriching our minds with nobler qualities, and for spreading happiness around us. When we can no longer do this, when, as in extreme old age, all hope of again being able to exert ourselves in this way ceases, then this life has lost its highest value, and a new existence becomes desirable.

Exalted souls, ye know of nobler possessions than life ! Ye who have gone to meet the hero's death for the freedom and welfare of your fatherland and thousands of oppressed fellow-citizens ; ye who, to uphold the truth of Jesus Christ's religion, have courageously chosen the path of the grave ; ye who have preferred death to a life without dignity and without virtue, — ye knew the true value of existence. Ye died courageously in the service of virtue, in the performance of heavenly deeds. Your death is more enviable than the life of thousands ! Ye blessed ones, ye teach those that remain behind what their lives ought to be. (Matt. xvi. 25.)

Life has no worth except through our virtues, through the happiness that we prepare for others. He therefore, who, like the animal, only lives to satisfy his hunger and his thirst, without any effort to prepare his mind for a future nobler existence ; he who lives merely to tickle his palate with daintier viands and more exquisite wines than other men ; he who lives but to clothe his body in finer raiment than other men, to satisfy his vanity and to display his miserable pride, — futilities that must vanish on the brink of the grave, — his existence has no worth, his death deserves no tear.

Frequently, again, the passionate clinging to life is but a consequence of too great a love and anxiety for those we may leave behind us. We tremble at death because it will tear us from the arms of a beloved husband or wife. We shrink back from the grave because, when we shall descend into it, dear children will stand around it, — poor orphans without education, without protection, without support.

For this reason we often see that young persons, who have no innocent dear ones depending on them, die more composedly than parents, whose eyes are fixed lovingly upon their children. But even in such cases the mind of a Christian ought not to be overwhelmed by the fear of death. It is not thou, O father, nor thou, O mother, who hast hitherto protected thy child: it is God! God is the father of the orphan; the same God who watches over the life and the well-being of the humblest worm. If He wills the welfare of thy children, verily no human power shall prevail against them. If God should call thee from them, hasten joyfully to the Heavenly Father; the time will come when He will call thy children also.

2. The second chief source whence springs the fear of death is the turning away of men's hearts from the eternal truths of religion.

You are, it is true, baptized in Christ; you confess Him in the Holy Supper; you perform the customary rites of religion; but do you also walk in the spirit of Christ and of his commandments? Are you conscious of your God, and at one with Him in the depths of a pious heart? Do you at all times walk in the ways of the Lord? Do you at all times aim at being just? Do you do all the good that is in your

power? Have you made peace with your enemies? Is your conscience troubled by the remembrance of secret sins?

The religious man stands highest in the human scale on earth. With his eyes fixed on eternity, with his hands stretched forth to do good, he walks in and with God; calm amid storms and tempests, blessed with the peace that God alone can bestow. But never does the sublimity of religion appear in a more beneficent light than in the hour of death, or even when connected with the mere thought of the tomb. It is then that its most blessed power is revealed.

A sensual, uncultivated man, when he thinks of death, feels the fearful isolation of his spirit, and anticipates the annihilation of all that he possesses. What is his spirit when deprived of that which has hitherto constituted its delights? He has never contemplated a higher destiny; what is to become of him then when he loses the earthly things which alone he knows and values? He is descending into the grave, and behind him he leaves merry feasts, gilded honors, costly garments, the flatteries of parasites, the obsequiousness of dependents, the heaped-up treasures which covetous heirs rush to divide. Poorer than the beggar that used to hang about his door he stands before the portals of eternity: he has lost his *all*; he knew but *one* world,—his earthly home. What is now to become of him?

O religion, O sweet peace of conscience, and thou, O union of my soul with the Most High, do not abandon me! Alas for him who only stretches forth his arms towards you, when all earthly things are melting away! Alas for him who does not fix his eyes on a higher existence until he feels this sublunary world giving way under his feet!

O Jesus, in thy holy revelation I will live, and in it I will die. Blessed is the power of thy word ; to it the power of death must yield. I live to Thee, and I shall not die. There is no death, there is no grave ; it is but change and glorification. God is no God of death ; He is our life. He created life, and my spirit is his work. My spirit is life, while it animates my body, and remains life, when the dust, which for a time clothed it as a garment, and which was to it as an instrument, returns again to dust.

Heavenly and eternal Father, Source of all being, Thou from whom I spring, unto whom I shall return, — thine I shall ever be ! Sweet is life, in truth, but death has nevertheless no terrors ; no fear of it shall overwhelm me, shall turn me away from Thee and from the path of virtue. I hold as naught the days that I do not adorn with good deeds ; I hold as naught a life which I cannot glorify by virtue.

And me also, me also, O God, Thou wilt call unto thyself when my hour comes, when my earthly goal is reached. Blessed shall I then be if I can say unto myself, *I have fought a good fight* ; as far as my powers allowed, I have completed a life of well-doing ; *the crown of eternal life awaits me also !*

And when in the last hour I have to taste the bitterness of death, to drain the final cup of trial ; when my stiffened hand can no longer bestow a blessing on my loved ones, from whose sorrowful eyes the tears of parting are falling on my pillow, my closed lips can no longer utter words of love, of love true unto death ; when the stir of the world and all the sweet sounds of life cease to fall upon my ear, — then, then, O Lord ! I commend my soul to Thee. Joyfully I turn away my dimmed eyes from those who are dear

to my heart, for I know they are in thy keeping. Thou abidest with them as Thou abidest with me, forevermore in the regions of eternal life.

No, I fear not death, *O Father of life!* For death is not eternal sleep; it is the transition to a new life, a moment of great and glorious transformation, an ascension towards Thee.

Yet we cannot deem unpardonable the tear that is wept over the bier of a beloved object. O Source of all Love, thine eye penetrates our inmost being. Thou seest the bleeding heart of the mother standing by the coffin of her child, which carries with it into the grave her brightest hopes. Thou knowest the heart-rending grief of the father who has, by the death of a beloved son or daughter, been bereft of every happiness in this life. May thy Spirit, the blessed Comforter, penetrate our souls, and inspire with its strength our poor human hearts! Alas! we are but mortals. We are overwhelmed by the power of the moment: angels would in such moments praise Thee!

Finally, the death of our loved one sweetens our own death, which leads us towards eternal reunion. The affectionate words of Christ are an earnest to us of a more joyful futurity. We also shall one day be with our loved ones in paradise. Amen, O God and Father! So be it. Amen.

FEAR OF DEATH.

PART II.

Away, pale fear of death, away!
Rejoice thyself in death, my heart,
The cold corpse will rejoin its clay,
And grief shall end, and pain's sharp smart,
And the well of tears shall dry
When the dust in dust shall lie.

Thou healest every wound, O death!
Thy touch at once each sorrow charms;
As departs my failing breath,
Flee I unto angels' arms.
Though inclosed within the grave,
Light and freedom shall I have.

Father, for each earthly pleasure
Heart-felt thanks from me receive.
Thanks, should grief o'erflow the measure,
Father, still my soul shall give:
Shouldst Thou take them both from me,
Yet more gladly praise I Thee!

(2 Cor. v. 1.)

A COLD shudder seizes me at the thought of death, and every fibre of my body seems to struggle against the feeling of dissolution and separation. And yet, however much my whole being may revolt against it, like others I must die. I see pass by me to the grave the corpse of the child faded in the bud, and of the old man worn out with years. The ashes of the maiden, called away in her early bloom, mingle with those of the man whom some dire event, some unforeseen accident, has cut off in the

prime of his manhood and activity. And my corpse, too, will one day be laid among the rest.

Why am I alive? Why should not death be as familiar to me as life, as both come to me without my will and without my knowledge?

Sobbing with grief, the faithful husband stands by the coffin of his dear partner, his second self, her whom he called the better half of his heart; with similar grief a devoted child remembers an affectionate father, or a gentle, loving mother, who has been taken from him, alas! too soon; painfully fall the tears of the sorrowing bride on the cold clay of her beloved, whose death is to her the death of every hope in life; deep is the sadness with which father or mother contemplates the little grave which covers the remains of the darling child, whose innocence and grace so often delighted their hearts, and filled their views of the future with soul-elevating images.

Wherefore do I weep? And wherefore do you weep, who have lost beloved ones? Is it for the dead, because they have to leave all that is dear to them, — to leave a life which has bestowed so many pleasures, and promises so many more? Oh uncalled-for compassion! Do we pity each night our dear ones when they fall asleep, or do we pity ourselves when we go to rest? Yet what difference is there between sleep and death? True, he who falls asleep feels a profound assurance that with the rising sun he will awake again with renewed strength; while the dying has not so near a hope. But when he awakes he will find instead of you the long lost dear ones that have gone before him; he will find his God, who will be more to him than you could ever be, poor orphans! he finds a blessed state that will en-

dure forever ; nay, he will in a short time even find you again. For what is the duration of even the longest life on earth ? Ask the old man of three-score and ten, and he will tell you, — “ So little have I retained of my life, that it seems to me but a summer night’s dream of threescore minutes and ten.” Then, wherefore do we weep ? Even sleep causes separation ; and the separation in death, is it for a much longer term ?

Nay, we ought to be able to say good night to our dying friends with the same calm composure with which we take leave of each other in the evening, when, looking confidently beyond the night, we enjoy in advance the pleasures of the coming morn ; or we ought to whisper our friendly farewell as though they were about to set out on a safe journey to a pleasant land, to the house of our Father, the home of our loved ones, whence an invitation has gone forth to them, and whither we shall follow ere long.

In truth, when divested of all the gloomy subordinate circumstances with which my imagination invests death, it is not so terrible. No one would think of it as dreadful had he never seen a dead corpse, — the pallor, coldness, and stony impassiveness of which cause a shudder ; did he know naught of death but that it is a transformation of our souls, a passing away to a happier and more blessed home.

It is to our imaginations we owe the gloomy thoughts that most distress us ; in the fullness of our health and strength, and our love of life, we fancy ourselves in the place of the dying, and thus we experience grief that he knows not, and endure pains that he does not suffer. We fancy ourselves in the dark tomb, and behold the members of the body being

converted into dust, and the grave seems to us the end of all life.

But if we set aside these terrific images, the offspring of our own brains, which have no existence in reality, we shall find little difference between sleep and death. Numbers of persons, who in their lifetime have entertained a most unreasonable fear of death, have ultimately passed away with a cheerfulness and serene composure which they never expected.

It is still more unreasonable to picture to ourselves the moment of the soul's parting from the body as especially painful. Whether this disruption causes suffering to the body, no one is able to tell. The spasmodic twitching of the muscles (which in many cases indeed does not take place) is distressing to behold, but is painless as a sensation. With the exception of falling asleep, nothing is so similar to the passing away in death as the sinking of a person into a swoon ; yet he who faints experiences little or no suffering before unconsciousness ensues. Perhaps, if artificial stimulants were not applied to restore to his nervous system the power of serving the soul, he would pass from the swoon into death without any further sensation. Such also is the condition of all those who, reduced to unconsciousness by excessive cold, are eventually restored to life. Their limbs are benumbed, their blood flows slower and slower, and finally the body stiffens as in death. The only sensation they experience is unconquerable drowsiness, and desire to lie down and rest ; and though they may be perfectly conscious that sleep is likely to end in death, they nevertheless brave it that they may enjoy the delight of sleep.

It is thus established that the moment of dissolution has in itself nothing that is terrible, that very few persons are clearly conscious of it, and that it is the imagination of the survivors that invests it with horrors. And yet even in this case it is not the act of dying itself that seems so terrible, but the thought. What shall I be when I have ceased to belong to humanity, when I have been stripped of my human form? It is this uncertainty as to all that is in store for us that fills us with awe. The darkness that envelops the future makes us rejoice doubly in the broad daylight that surrounds us; we learn to appreciate that which we possess; and we tremble at the thought of exchanging all that is familiar to us for a state of which we can hardly form a conception.

Had the wisdom of the Creator vouchsafed to us in this life a knowledge of what is to come in the next, verily the grave would cease to be a barrier, and a small number only would await patiently the natural hour of death.

But the very uncertainty in which we are left constitutes the strongest tie that binds to life the impatient and the frivolous, who are apt to be thrown into despair by the slightest adversity, and prevents them from cutting short the term of trial appointed for them. It is this that surrounds death with such awe, that all who are not bereft of reason shrink back from it.

But even this uncertainty is only terrifying as long as the future world seems far off; in the hour of death it changes character. Then it is the life that lies behind us that appears dark and vague; while the future, with its new existence, is irradiated by the light of certainty. The dying man makes up his

account with the world, once more bestows his blessing upon his dear ones, and turns away from all that he loves best, in order to shut himself up within himself, and to pass over into the happier existence. The past has no charms for him ; he is attracted solely by the new world, on the threshold of which he stands.

However, it is not to all that death loses its terrors. It is with reason that the sinner trembles when he beholds it in the distance, and still more so when he finds himself inevitably face to face with it.

But who is the sinner? Every one to whom this earthly life is all in all, and to whom the Divine element in it is nothing ; every one who lives for this world as were it never to end ; every one who thinks more of the gratification of his senses than of the improvement of his immortal spirit ; every one who wastes year after year in endeavoring to increase his earthly possessions and dignities, who lives but to adorn his person, to enjoy frivolous pleasures, to triumph over his rivals and opponents, — in a word, to secure to himself such earthly goods as seem to him most desirable, while he feels it irksome to devote a moment to the perfecting of his undying soul.

When such a one dies, his soul is in death even poorer than in the first hour of his birth, when at least it possessed the jewel innocence. He dies, and his spirit sinks into nothingness ; for earthly goods were *everything* to him, and he himself was but an instrument of rude passions. What becomes of the soul, if made the slave of the body, when the body, its master and idol, has been converted into dust? What becomes, in death, of the accomplishments of the body, the artistic language of gesture, the sportive wit of the moment, the capacity for over-reaching and

seducing others, the power of flattery, the thousand little arts of vanity and conceit? They perish with the flesh. But the poor neglected spirit and the forgotten eternity, — they endure! Fearful as it may be, they endure; and the consequences of sin, and the account to be rendered, and the judgment, and the righteous before God, — they endure.

Lost one! my soul is moved with sorrow at thy lot. Angels may well weep over it; but thou hadst warning. God, nature, reason, the events of the world, joy, misfortune, men, books, — all preached it to thee; all recalled to thee thy higher destiny; all warned thee, now louder, now more gently, now in threatening tones, now in imploring accents, to remember the *one thing* needful. Lost one! thou didst smile proudly, and thy pride was thy god. Thou wert ashamed of being good, — called it visionary enthusiasm, romance, folly, to ask of thee to be truly, humanly noble, by rising above thy dearest passions! Lost one! thou hast prepared thine own destiny, and no angel will alter the eternal laws of nature or of the world of spirits. God is just, and no prayers, no sweat of agony on thy pale forehead, can save thee: thy life lies wasted behind thee; thy spirit passes, without a hope of a better lot, into the new existence. Thou hast enjoyed thy goods, and thou hast thy reward.

Yea, most assuredly, a dreadful certainty awaits him who in this life has lived but for the present, as though it were not to be followed by a hereafter! But equally certain is that which awaits the righteous man who has quietly pursued the path of duty and virtue, and who has preferred the well-being, the peace, the happiness, of those around him, to his own.

He enjoys certainty. His heart tells him, Thou shalt not die entirely; eternal love watches over thee. Nature tells him so, when through her wonders he beholds, as through a veil, God in his majesty, his infinitude, and his mercy. His religion, as revealed by Jesus, teaches it. He knows that our earthly mansion, our frail body, will be destroyed, but that we have a building, built by God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2 Cor. v. 1.)

What are the terrors of death to a noble mind? A play of the imagination, at which, not the soul, but only what is earthly in us, trembles. Has not Jesus Christ conquered for us the terrors of death? Did He not open for us joyful admission to the Father, when He taught us to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect?

Though the body may shudder when about to be reduced to ashes again, and it ceases to be an instrument of the soul that until then had animated it, the spirit of the righteous is at the same time seized with holy transports: for it sees throughout the entire universe LIFE only, nowhere death; it sees the mutual relations of all things, sees no link wanting in the great chain of beings which the almighty hand of God has woven.

Millions before me have fought the battle and won the victory, and millions will do so after me. Shall I alone, then, shrink back with vain and cowardly fear from a death which is not death? Nay, let us depart courageously and cheerfully by faith, if not yet by sight. (2 Cor. v. 7.) These friends, these children, these loved ones to whom my heart clings so tenderly, when I part from them, will it be forever? Nay, it is but separation for the length of a

summer night. Their congenial souls will remain true to mine. The kind though mysterious hand of Providence, which made us find each other in the gloom of this life, will reunite us again in the bright daylight of eternal being. God, whom the eternal Son, whom Jesus calls Love, Love the purest and the highest, will not destroy and tear asunder that love which He himself created. No, the All-holy One, in whose likeness we may grow through love and virtue, will not allow love and virtue to fade with the dust, from which they do not spring.

If, then, it be my Father's will that I should depart hence earlier than ye, whom He confided to my care, — ye beloved ones, whom He bestowed upon me, to gladden my life, — my last look will dwell upon you with tender blessings, while eternity is beckoning me away. The tears of sadness ye weep at my death-bed shall be to me the last test of your faithful love, which so often shed happiness around me, and which can never die ! Ye will cease to weep for me, but not to love me ; and even in its heavenly abode, even amid the pure transports it may there enjoy, my soul will continue to love you, — that sentiment which God implanted in it I will lay again before his throne. "Weep not," I will whisper to you in my last hour ; "that is not death where innocence, virtue, and holiness live. Sin only is the death of the soul. Flee sin, hold fast to God, act divinely in as far as your powers will allow, and we shall belong to each other and remain united there as here."

Yes, henceforward I will walk more steadily in the path of righteousness, and the terrors of death will vanish before the consciousness of my growth in goodness, as mist disappears before the rays of the

morning sun. How cheerfully have not numbers of noble mortals voluntarily encountered certain death for truth and right, for their country and for the good of humanity ! They died in the good cause as martyrs to their own nobility of soul. Ye, exalted minds, ye prized sacred objects higher than a life without merit, — prized the duties of the spirit higher than a few brief hours or years spent in the sensuous enjoyments of earth. Ye esteemed death in the cause of God a gain ; it was to you but as a change of garment, and in reality was but this : you cast off the perishable raiment, to clothe yourselves in the imperishable.

Ah, enviable fate, to breathe out the spirit in the arms of God, while sacrificing an empty, worthless life in the fulfillment of duty ! Jesus ! such was thy death, the death that redeemed the world ! Ah ! could such be the death of all thy followers, could mine be such ! May it be my lot to give up my spirit in the midst of well-doing, and while surrounded by the blessings of a world rendered happier through my exertions !

Finally, what attractions has this earth that should make parting from it so difficult ? The desire of the righteous is to be forever growing in righteousness. Can the opportunity be accorded here below for this continued growth ? No ; this holy craving can only be satisfied after they awake in the higher existence.

And the joys of this life, — though I am far from holding them lightly, for they are the gifts of God, — how fleeting are they not ! How quickly do we not tire even of the greatest pleasures of earth ! What have we gained, when we have obtained all that we have lusted for ? What, but the constant

repetition of a drop of honey mixed with a drop of gall? None of this world's pleasures is quite unalloyed.

Thou fearest death, O feeble mortal? What then wouldst thou gain by an unusually prolonged life? Thou wouldst see the friends of thy youth, thy children, all thy loved ones, descend before thee into the grave; thou wouldst find thyself at last alone in the world, a forlorn stranger, no longer having aught in common with it. Thou wouldst stretch out thine arms longingly towards those that had gone before thee, and thou wouldst weary of the empty hours of thy earthly existence. Thy protracted life would become to thee but a painful burden, which thou wouldst willingly consign to the arms of death, that thou mightest hasten free and joyful towards the beloved spirits that await thee yonder, where no sorrow, no parting, no tear, is known!

Yes, O my Saviour, I will become what Thou demandest of me, — a true child of God, useful, loving, delighting in well-doing, without hatred or vanity or covetousness, pure as Thou wert, divine Friend of man! Then for me the grave will have no terrors; then death will be to me only the easy passing from dreaming to waking.

And when I shall awaken into the eternal, more blissful existence, O Jesus, Revealer of eternity! O God, bountiful Dispenser of the never-ending bliss of our spirits! what holy transports fill my being at the mere thought of what I shall then enjoy! The grave is my cradle, death is my awaking, the sunset of this life is the sunrise of existence in the regions of eternity!

Ah, ye dear ones, who have gone before me! ye

tenderly beloved ones, whose sacred memory I still honor here on earth with my tears : how my heart yearns for you ! And I shall once more be with you. Though more perfect than I, ye still love me as I love you. It is love that binds together the spirits of distant worlds, that forms the link between heaven and earth ; therefore its flame can never die out in my heart ! And this love shall sanctify me, this hope of reunion shall be my safeguard against all temptations to sin. Towards you are directed all my wishes, — fain would I again blend my being with yours. Therefore will I devote my whole soul to God and virtue, that through God I may find you. I fear death no longer ! It is but the messenger of God, sent to liberate me, to lead me to you.

Soon ! oh soon ! shall all be done, —
Peaceful rest I, Lord, in Thee ;
Thousands have the victory won, —
I, too, shall win the victory.
Louder in death than Nature's voice,
My heart outcries, Have faith ! — Rejoice !

GOD IS LOVE.

Could we silence every tongue,
Love! thy praise would still be sung.
Sun and moon, and stars above,
All bear witness, God is Love.
Silent heights, depths, earth and heaven,
Soul! by thee is witness given.

Labor's impulse, peaceful hour,
Joy in living, come from Thee.
I — what am I? whence my power?
Gave a foe this strength to me?
Say, are speech, ear, sight, and feeling
Tokens of love, or hate's revealing?

Oh, I feel Thee, and before Thee,
Father of Love, in praise I fall;
For that I *am* I will adore Thee, —
Join the chorus, creatures all.
Love gave me life, and from above
Bestows all good, because 't is Love.

(1 JOHN iv. 3.)

GOD is Love! How constantly is not this thought — the most comforting of all to an anxious human heart — reproduced in the prayers and writings of Christians, and yet how few quite comprehend it! and, more deplorable still, how few have full and unswerving faith in this blessed truth!

Heaven and earth proclaim it, for every law of nature bears witness to it; reason also bids us put faith in it, — the revelations of Jesus Christ preach it, — and yet how vague and uncertain is the belief in it in the most human hearts!

All the nations of antiquity have said it : God is the wisest and purest Love. The most enlightened as well as the least civilized peoples of the present day profess it. Yet all have witnessed many fearful events seemingly in contradiction with this faith. They have seen dreadful wars that have struck down the hopes of nations, — wars which have been permitted by God : and they have been terrified at the thought that these evils were sent by the God of Love. They have seen floods and inundations devastate whole countries ; they have seen earthquakes shake the earth to its very foundations, cities and villages engulfed in the fiery abyss, and millions of human beings destroyed in a moment. They have seen mountains give way and bury under their ruins populous regions ; they have seen a single tempest sweep every ship from the seas, and famine and pestilence convert smiling landscapes into deserts, — and with doubting hearts they have asked, Can all this havoc be the work of a loving God ?

No ! cried a voice in their bosoms ; and yet the dreadful events would force themselves upon their memory. Hereupon they endeavored, by the light of their immature reason, to solve the apparent contradictions in the government of the world, and thus they came to believe, not only in the loving Father of all, but also in an EVIL BEING, who is ever contending against his goodness. Their childish imaginations created two deities of almost equal might, and placed both, as antagonistic powers, on the throne of the universe. They loved the Good Deity, and brought Him thank-offerings ; and they feared the evil deity, or the Devil, and endeavored to allay his enmity by prayers.

In this manner the ignorant heathens interpreted the origin of evil in the world, which their weak understandings and their imperfect conceptions of the greatness of God, could not reconcile with his goodness. In consequence, the idea of a mighty evil spirit, opposed to God was introduced among the Jews also, when they dwelt among the heathen during the Babylonian captivity; and this notion of a Devil, as the author of all evil in the world, was again transmitted from the Jews to the Christians, Jesus and his Apostles having, when addressing Jews, made use of figures of speech which would be likely to be understood by the people.

This ungenerous notion, so incompatible with the omnipotence and omniscience of God, is perhaps hardly worthy of a refutation. There is no God but God! He, and He only of all beings, is the Lord of the living and the dead. He alone rules the destinies of the worlds, as those of the humblest worm in the dust.

Thus thinks the Christian. But unfortunately the conceptions which a great number of Christians form of the all-loving God are not therefore more exalted, but frequently (hard as it is to believe) even less pure than those of the heathen. When the heathen found it impossible to reconcile the goodness of God with the evils of life, he invented, as a means of explaining the contradiction, a second deity, an evil being; but he did not accuse the God of goodness of being the author of evil, and did not attribute to Him low human, or rather animal, passions. Many Christians, on the contrary, who as such believe of course in one God only, seeing the many ills that afflict humanity, explain these by conceiving of God as a God

of vengeance, as an angry God, a jealous and inexorable God, who punishes the faults of a moment (for is man's life on earth more than a brief moment?) with the sufferings of eternity, and who takes revenge for the sins of the fathers on their innocent offspring, — actions which, if committed by a human being, would rightly be considered as execrable and unjustifiable.

These ideas of the Most High originated at a period when the human race was still in its infancy, and when men hardly formed a higher conception of God than that of a very powerful human being, and when they even depicted the Deity in human form. These are remnants from the time when Moses exhorted the Israelites, and when he was obliged to use expressions that could make an impression on their hard hearts. For what were the children of Israel, at the time they were led out of Egypt? Were they not rude and ignorant, without instruction, without education, accustomed only to bondage under their Egyptian masters, obeying only when they felt the lash over them? Did they not make unto themselves idols of gold and stone, and worship these as they had seen the Egyptians worship their idols? Did they not even do this after Moses had preached to them that there was but one Almighty God, and no other God?

To be able to guide such a people and to accustom them to strict obedience to the heavenly precepts, Moses was obliged to address them in accordance with their usual modes of thought. Children must be spoken to in terms different from those which would be used to grown-up persons, and ignorant, uncivilized nations cannot be addressed in the same language as thinking, highly cultivated peoples.

However, even after the Israelites accepted the laws of Moses, and faithfully conformed to them, these ruder conceptions of God, meant only for their fathers, when they came out of the Egyptian bondage more than a thousand years previously, continued to prevail among them. And as the first Christians had been for the most part Jews, it followed as a matter of course that they took their conceptions of God over into Christianity with them. And thus they have descended from generation to generation, even unto our day, and have been maintained, partly by the circumstances of the times and society, partly by the circumscribed knowledge of many teachers, partly by erroneous interpretations and applications of certain passages in Holy Writ.

We, however, will hold fast by that alone which Jesus Christ taught and revealed. And He, the Eternal Son, described the Father as the purest Love, in whom there is no particle of evil, — as the all-perfect Being, in whom consequently no human passion or weakness can dwell, who is alike incapable of jealousy, of anger, of vengeance, and of repentance. He blames the outbreak of such passions in man; how, then, could he find them praiseworthy in the highest Being, in Him who is most emphatically Love and Goodness?

But how, if God knows neither anger nor vengeance, but only love, — how has evil come into the world? Who, then, is the author of all the misery and suffering we behold on earth? Thus asks the doubting Christian, suffering man, who knows not how to account for the existence of so much woe. If God is the Author of all things, is He not also the Author of evil? And how am I to reconcile this

with his wisdom and goodness, — nay, even with his justice ?

What can I answer to this, poor doubter, other than *in the entire universe there is no evil but sin* ? And sin is the work of man, springing from that freedom with which God has endowed him, to will and to do right or wrong.

Now, as in the Divine creation everything is just and good, all that is wrong and unjust, so to say, isolates itself ; and when man wills evil, he feels the suffering that attends this *dissociation*. This suffering, however, tends to reform and enlighten him, so that he may no longer act against God's order of creation. And to God's ordinances belong, not only the laws of nature around us, but also the laws within us.

We are, therefore, ourselves the principal authors of our sufferings, by rushing, in our blind passions, headlong against the eternal and unyielding rules of creation. Thus a child is the author of its own pain, when from ignorance it wounds itself with dangerous weapons ; but the pain is the beneficent teacher of prudence. Again, a child is the author of its own suffering, when, from willfulness, disobedience, obstinacy, or thoughtlessness, it partakes of things that are injurious to its health ; but this suffering is the beneficent inculcator of forethought and virtue.

The Divine laws that rule on earth are, that we should grow daily in wisdom, in knowledge, in virtue, and in godliness. Pain and suffering are man's guides to perfection. And even had wisdom and virtue never been preached to men, nature's silent language would have taught it to them.

It is true there are many evils in life which cannot

be said to be the consequences of our acts. When hail-storms destroy the growing corn, when war lays waste our homes, when the plague devastates the country, when floods or earthquakes swallow up flourishing cities and their inhabitants, what can poor, helpless men do to stay the powers of nature? How can they struggle against the might of God? And yet these are terrible evils,—and yet God is Love.

Yea, even amid the most fearful and destructive phenomena of nature, let it be proclaimed, God is Love.

For, after all, what is it that those terrible revolutions destroy? The earthly form of man,—not his real self, not his immortal spirit. And can we call the end of all earthly evils an evil? And is not death the conclusion of the earthly and the commencement of the higher existence? Now, when thousands and thousands of human beings, fathers with their children, husbands with their wives, die at the same moment, struck down by some natural catastrophe, in accordance with the plans of Providence, is there in the event itself any very great difference from death caused by sickness or such like? Would not those that perished at all events in a few years have gone home to the Eternal Father? If death is not an evil, then neither is earthquake, or flood, or pestilence, or any natural event which is destructive of human life, an evil to those who are thereby removed from this earth. It is only to the survivors that the grand spectacle of the destruction is terrific. But why? Because they see therein a proof of the weakness of mortal man, and they tremble at the thought of the power of the Most High.

But does this give us reason to despair of God's love? If that were so, then every case of death would afford similar reason. But who would be guilty of the folly of doubting God's love, because men draw nigh to the goal of their destination?

The sufferings endured by the victims of the catastrophes alluded to are often more painful than the death which puts an end to them. But these bodily pains, which are founded in the order of nature, afford no reason for attributing to the Deity cruelty or a love of vengeance. Such sufferings are only temporary, and when bodily pain grows beyond endurance it generally terminates in a swoon, and the patient becomes insensible. God's beneficent hand has thus ordained it; and more than this, He has ordained that by the side of every mortal affliction there shall grow compensatory joy, which the sufferer may cull if he chooses. Life on earth is but a many-colored series of changes.

But the physical pains which we endure during our earthly career are, like all other suffering, beneficent teachers. They warn us not to forget how fleeting, how mutable, how unreliable, is everything that belongs to earth, and is born of earth. They warn us not to attach too great value to these things, and rather to occupy our spirits with that which is unchangeable, eternal, and divine. He who does this can never be quite stricken down either by poverty, or sickness, or abandonment, or the death of his loved ones, or any other misfortune. He is exalted above the fluctuations of earthly happiness, and looks towards eternity.

There are other Christians who think that, having conceived of God as an infinitely perfect Being, they

must not attribute to Him any human qualities, not even the most sublime and lovable virtues which grace humanity. For, they say, that which is the most exalted in man, and which presents itself to the human mind as such, may, in the Deity, be no more than imperfection. Thus they maintain that, although that which we call love may be the highest jewel, the paradise of human life, we can nevertheless not conceive of such love as moves us as an attribute of the Deity; for we stand much too low in the scale of beings to be able to comprehend the perfection of God.

To many persons this mode of viewing the matter may seem most likely to be the true one; but if I ask them, Does it give them peace and happiness? they must answer, No; for if we divest God of the attribute of love, we stand indeed alone in the world, with no one to turn to for consolation, and life becomes a dark and insoluble riddle. Those who think thus do not deny God, it is true; but they deny the possibility of our forming a just and adequate conception of Him.

Miserable men! you confess that your views fail to render you happy: but why is this? Because you are at variance with yourselves or with your own reason. Bring your reason again into harmony with yourselves and with the universe, and you will reconquer your peace of mind.

It is true that we cannot approach even to a faint conception of the full measure of God's being. But it is as true that GOD IS as that you are. And this once admitted, your reason cannot but add that He is the most perfect of all perfect beings. For all imperfection is the reverse of divine.

It is undeniable that human reason, when forming to itself a conception of the Highest Being, must divest this being of all feelings and passions which have their origin in earthly nature, — such as anger, hatred, rancor, cruelty, or vengeance. For how can we form to ourselves an idea of Him as the most perfect of all beings, if we do not attribute to Him the highest perfection within our power of conception? Why, therefore, this self-contradiction? Why this hesitation to ascribe to the Highest Being the highest perfection? How do we gain any knowledge of God, except through the great works of his creation? Is not our reason the gift of God? Is it not through this reason that He has revealed himself to all nations? Do we not behold before us his works, in which He has given us a standard, though an infinitely small one, by which to measure his greatness?

If you refuse to conceive God as a perfect Spirit, you cannot conceive Him at all. Then God has made your reason a lie, and has surrounded you with meaningless phantasms. If you conceive Him as a being lifeless, yet wonderfully animating and setting in motion the whole universe, — as a powerful machine devoid of self-consciousness, but which causes the worlds to roll in their measureless orbits, and makes the sap to rise in the veins of the most insignificant lichen, according to eternal laws, — then you make self-conscious man more perfect and more divine than God; and reason, truth, and revelation you reduce to empty sounds.

If, on the contrary, you conceive God, *your* God, the God of the *Universe*, not as a lifeless being, who performs his wonderful works unconsciously (it seems madness even to suppose this), oh, then, honor in

Him the sublimest idea which He affords you of himself. You fear that, sublime as it may be, it is unworthy of his Majesty. Nay, those ideas which He has himself enabled us to form cannot be unworthy of Him. See, the high heavens, star-spangled with innumerable worlds, paint an image of themselves on the retina of your eye; and yet how small is your eye and how immeasurable are those distances, how illimitable that space, which the most highly cultivated reason suffices not to calculate or to fathom! Nevertheless, it is through this miniature picture on the glossy surface of your eye that you are alone able to discern them and admire them, and thus also the infinite God! He mirrors his perfection and his greatness, which no mind can compass or fathom, on the eye of the mind.

Love for what is great, good, beautiful, holy, perfect, prevails throughout the spiritual world; a loving Wisdom reveals itself in all the wonders of heaven and earth; and what God speaks to you through the evidences of his power, would you deny it? You dare to pronounce man sublime in his holy love, and you hesitate to declare God to be the purest Love! When man willingly sacrifices life and all its joys for love of God and virtue, how exalted does he not appear to us! And yet you can doubt that God is Love! Does, then, man bear within himself something more divine than God?

Away with these fallacies, bred of human sophistry and one-sided science! Thou, O God, art Love! Not in vain hast Thou endowed us with this sentiment and this feeling, which links soul to soul, the living to the dead, and is but a ray of thy infinite perfection, which mirrors itself faithfully in the spirit

of man. Thou art love, and naught but love ! Does not the whole creation proclaim it ? Do not the events of my own life bear witness to it ? Does not Jesus Christ, the Divine Enlightener of man, declare it ?

Thou art Eternal Love ! Thou wilt never disunite what Thou hast united in spirit ; Thou wilt never, O Father, separate us, thy children, from thyself. Thou didst not in vain send Jesus to us, to guide us to Thee. Thou wilt never, O Father, dissever the loving spirits which Thou hast led together here on earth. As they belong to each other here, so will they belong to each other hereafter. They will be reunited in Thee, Thou centre of all that is spiritual and of all that is blissful !

Oh, exquisite thought ! Oh, inspiring hope ! God is Love, and whosoever dwells in love can never feel forsaken, and can never cease to exist !

THE CONSOLATION OF THE PATIENT SUFFERER.

Be strong, my soul, although to-morrow
Each earthly joy were from thee torn;
Have courage, though the bitterest sorrow
Should leave thee comfortless to mourn.
Upraise thee, groveler, from the dust,
In soul to grasp thy God, and trust;
Be worthy of the glorious lot
Which He who died for thee, the Son,
Has for thee from the Father won.
This life's a dream that lingereth not.

Striv'st thou with zeal to bless thy kind,
Still on thy country's good intent,
Were the whole world against thee joined,
Ne'er of thy righteous zeal repent.
Let neither wile nor mock of sin
Stifle the still, small voice within,
Nor hinder thee from deeds of love.
Thy heaven is in the realms above.

(2 TIM. iv. 7, 8.)

THE most virtuous Christian ought already here on earth to be the happiest, yet this is not always the case. It is true, Religion sheds her soothing balm, her heavenly peace, through the hearts of her worshipers, so that even in the deepest depths of their miseries they cannot be utterly wretched; she affords them an anchor in the wildest tempest, a star to guide them through the darkest night. But there are hours, there are days, when even this anchor seems to give way, when even the light of this star seems to grow dim. There are hours and days when

even the consciousness of our uprightness, the sense of our own worth, the remembrance of our virtues, far from soothing our distress, only increase it; nay, overwhelm us with an excess of anguish. In such an hour it was that Jesus, bowed down in the dust, shed drops of bloody sweat, and cried, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" In such an hour it was that He stammered with dying accents on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Sufferings of an unusual nature may indeed at times even shake our faith. When we find that we, though full of resignation to the ways of Providence, of unwavering trust in the eternal love of God, of affectionate sympathy for the weal and woe of our fellow-beings, and though devoting ourselves industriously to the duties of our office, are visited by misfortune and affliction, while bad men bask in the smiles of fortune, revel in well-being, rise in the world, though totally devoid of merit, and know no sorrow and no suffering, — ah, how pardonable is at such times the groan of the deeply depressed Christian: "Of what use is my virtue, of what avail are my prayers so full of heart-felt devotion, of what avail my endeavors for the good of others, or the many sacrifices I have so frequently made to principle? See, vice is exultant; and virtue is scorned. The railer against God triumphs; fear of God, innocence of mind, are scoffed at as folly; and the worshiper of God weeps lone'y in the dust. No one approaches lovingly the poor, deserted sufferer; even God's mercy seems to have turned away from him. Is, then, the order of the world, such as God created it, antagonistic to all that is called religion and piety?

Are noble hearts predestined to suffer? Does the Ruler of the universe crown only unscrupulousness, base crime, and cunning shamelessness?—Where am I? Why was I taught by Jesus to treasure a pure heart as above all price, when this heart is, more than any other, exposed to every grief?"

What has the pious Christian done, that the thunder-cloud of war should burst destructively over his cottage? Perhaps his sons, the hopes of his life, have been murdered, his daughters dishonored, his goods destroyed, his means of subsistence taken from him. As a helpless beggar he must struggle with want all the rest of his days, and totter to the grave without a friend to comfort and sustain him; while worse men than he have enriched themselves by fraudulent means, and pass through life honored, loved, and flattered. What has the child been guilty of, who is tortured by sickness which it has not brought upon itself, and has to drag on through a blighted life with an unhealthy body? He grows into youth and manhood,—but of what avail are his ardent prayers for health to the Hearer of all prayer? They are not answered. Of what avail is his pious heart, his keen desire to be useful to others? He lives and dies in helpless misery, while others in the enjoyment of blooming health seem to have received the fullness of strength from Heaven only to enable them to inflict the more evils on the world.

Yes, who can venture to deny it? There are sufferings in the world, the spectacle of which tempts us to doubt the rule of an all-just Providence, and the value of piety and virtue; when our faith and trust give way, and unconquerable melancholy takes possession of the soul.

But even during such moments of despair a friendly voice from heaven cries to our heart in the words of Jesus: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The only fountain of consolation, therefore, when reason fails to supply such, is the religion of Jesus. Whither, indeed, should we flee, when the world deserts us, but to the arms of God, in whose might we dwell?

And however furiously the storms of life may rage around us; though every door of escape may seem closed against us; though the light on our path through life be extinguished; though the last friend depart from us; though our grief and distress may have reached their climax, life and death be struggling for mastery within us, — God is still our God! Whatever happens is still his work, and the work of the most exalted love. That which He withholds from our earthly part will form the strength of our immortal soul; that which we have lost, and may still lose, was and is only transitory, and to lose it we must all be prepared; but our spirits are enriched by the bereavement, are brought closer to God thereby.

Therefore, courage, unswerving principle, and faith, even in the hour of bitterest trial! He will not abandon thee, He will not forsake thee, though all earthly blessings fail thee, if thou do not forsake Him! Who has ever promised thee that the things of this world should be other than fleeting? Who has ever promised that thy sweet dreams should prove eternal? And even if, like Job, thou hast been deprived of thy best, thy all, what is it that thou hast lost? — Mere dust and ashes! "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away!"

If thou keepest up thy courage and thy faith, thou

hast lost nothing ; for God is all in all, and all else is naught. And God will be near to thee, for thou art his creature ; thou art an object of his care, of his love ! God remains near thee, even when the world to thy dimmed eye is shrouded in darkness, and the wings of death are waving above thee, — for the goal of thy spirit is eternity.

Blessed wilt thou be if, at the end of thy life's journey, thou canst say, with proud consciousness of how thou hast passed through every trial : “ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ! ”

It is an error to believe that virtue can be *rewarded* with earthly goods, with riches, honors, health, and all kinds of human enjoyments. No, the spirit cannot be rewarded with what belongs to the flesh ; its rewards must be spiritual. The spirit's nature is immortal ; its joys must be immortal like itself. Only in as far as we are human, that is to say, sensuous beings, do we seek for sensuous pleasures. These, however, fall to our lot, or are withdrawn from us, quite independently of our virtue and piety. They are the results, partly of our prudence and judgment, partly of our honest industry, partly of the confidence with which we have known how to inspire others. They are partly, or indeed entirely, the consequences of the wise ordinances of the Ruler of the world, according as He finds one or another auxiliary means better adapted to the qualities of our souls.

It is therefore erroneous to conclude, that because a man is visited by corporeal privations, and suffers from the loss of earthly goods, this is a punishment of God. It is likewise a mistake to look upon wealth, honors, and other gifts of fortune as rewards be-

stowed by God. The noblest, most faithful Christian is often subject to the greatest privations. The most audacious rogue, who mocks at religion, often accumulates the largest fortune. A more glorious recompense awaits the righteous ; a more terrible punishment than mere bodily privations awaits the sinner.

It is true that parents encourage their children in obedience by bestowing earthly rewards on them ; it is true that princes requite the merits of their subjects with riches and honors, — not that virtue can be paid for in so much money, but because princes, not being divinities, cannot requite services, cannot testify their esteem, except through the bestowal of earthly tokens.

On the other hand, the sufferings to which as mortals we are subject are either self-imposed, — in which case, they are painful consequences of the abuse which we have made of the gifts and capabilities with which God has endowed us, of transgressions against his rules, and thus they are indeed punishments inflicted by sin upon itself, — or they fall upon us without any fault of our own ; and in this case, it is God's will that they should be to us what the gifts of fortune may be to others, — means for ennobling and perfecting our souls. And thus all suffering at length conduces to the triumph of the victorious spirit, and opens to it a more glorious career in eternity. God is just ! Throughout the creation there is nothing wrong or unjust. Everything leads upward to a glorious end. God the Rewarder lives ! And what, after all, are the sufferings of this earth when compared to the glory to which they consecrate us, by endowing our souls with higher strength, power, and dignity ?

Besides, the wisdom of the Most High has so ordained it, that no pains connected with earth can endure forever. Only he who suffers damage in his soul, who fails to improve his spirit, — only he loses eternally ; because he neglects that which is eternal. Habit deprives even the most appalling evils of their terrors, and makes the heaviest burdens lighter. No suffering endures for very long. For every wound, however painfully it bleeds, time has a soothing balm. Night is ever followed by morning, storm by calm. We are dwelling in the realm of the transitory ; and as no joy endures forever, so also sorrow, want, and anxiety are but fleeting clouds in our sky.

Sustain thy courage, persevere in well-doing, keep thy faith and trust in God, and thou wilt come triumphant out of the struggle, thy brows encircled by the crown of glory, which God, the Rewarder, bestoweth.

Thou art pining in helpless poverty, and can see no end to thy tribulations. Thou hast labored honestly and industriously, and yet hast laid by no store, and each succeeding day makes thee tremble more and more for the future. Though faithful in the fulfillment of the duties of thy vocation, though trustful in thy prayers to the Giver of all good gifts, thou nevertheless sinkest deeper and deeper into poverty and misery. Instead of diminishing, thy difficulties increase every day with fearful rapidity ; thou seest no means of rescue. Before thy family lies a future full of pain and privation, — before thyself a life robbed of honor and happiness. Yet man thyself, O unhappy mortal ! and though all forsake thee, forsake not thou the path of virtue. Though every hope break faithlessly away from thee, do not loose thy

hold on God ! Save the innocence of thy soul, and thou wilt have saved everything. Many have been more deeply involved even than thou, and yet have been wonderfully rescued by Providence. Fight a good fight, and keep thy faith. Even when all have forsaken thee, God is still thy God.

And thou, who never sparedst labor or pains when thou couldst promote the well-being of thy fellow-citizens ; who didst sacrifice the best years of thy life, fortune, time, and rest to the welfare of others, — why dost thou chafe at the heartless ingratitude of men ? They requite thy love with shameless calumny, thy noble-mindedness with baseness, thy sacrifices with scorn, thy fidelity with contempt and desertion. Malice triumphs, prejudice prevails, thou succumbest. Yet be of good heart, fight trustfully the good fight to the end. There is ONE who does not misjudge thee ; there is ONE who will deal justly by thee. He is the Omniscient, the Rewarder ! Did Jesus do less than thee ? Did the world reward Him better ?

Thou who art stricken down in the prime of thy strength by painful illness, that deprives thee of all enjoyment and all hope in life, — despair not ! As regards thy earthly prosperity, those hours are indeed lost which thou sighest away on thy bed of pain ; but to thy soul they are not lost. In these bitter moments of agony thou art securing higher gain. Thou who once stood there so proudly in the fullness of thy health and strength, who wert so rich in plans for the future, — thou acknowledgest now with fear and trembling the hand of a Mighty One above thee, which rules the fate of worlds, and of the meanest creature. It is his will that has fixed thy destiny. It is true thy wealth will suffer, now that

thy arm fails that kept it up ; it is true thy children, almost uncared for, move like orphans round thy bed, casting sad and anxious glances at thee ; it is true deep sorrow gnaws at the heart of thy loving spouse, though she endeavors to hide it from thee, — yet do not despair ! A strong arm upholds thee, — the arm of Divine Providence. And should even thy illness become still more painful, thy fortune still more impaired, thy prospects still more hopeless, God is still thy God ! Fight the good fight in thy hours of suffering, and keep thy faith. Not as thou seest it, but as God ordaineth it, will be the fate of thy children. And shouldst thou be doomed to part from thy loved ones, should the tears in the eyes of thy dear relatives be the first tears of the last parting, — then blessed art thou ! The Father of all is calling thee a few moments earlier into the better world. We shall follow thee in a few brief hours, after another short dream. Why sorrowest thou with faithless anxiety for those who will linger on earth but a short time after thee ? Who cared for thee, when no mortal watched over thee ? Is thy God not also the God of thy dear ones ?

And thou who with loving heart hast attached thyself, as thou thoughtest, to a congenial mind, and sought the happiness of life in this friendship only, — why art thou so downcast ? Because that heart deceived thee ? Because those lips only feigned the love which thou gavest with all thy soul ? Because those eyes falsely smiled on thee ? Because thy faith was responded to with base perjury, and thy tenderness requited with shameless treachery ? Unhappy mourner, thou hast indeed lost much ; thy experience has perhaps forever embittered thy gentle heart, and

robbed thee of thy faith in mankind. The treachery thou hast met with has perhaps filled thy heart forever with disbelief in human virtue. Thou hast no longer a friend in whom thou canst trust, to whom thou canst devote thyself. Thou standest alone in the world; and without friendship life has no attractions for thy delicately moulded soul. Nevertheless, bear up manfully. Thou, also, prepare to fight the good fight of the Christian; be generous-minded to the last! God is faithful, though none else be so! If the whole world deceive thee, there is ONE who never deceiveth. He is thy God, the God of truth and love, the God who endowed thy soul with its tender yearnings. Even shouldst thou be doomed to pass through life without an earthly friend, ONE Friend remaineth to thee, — the Eternal Father, thy Creator! If those who are dearest to thee abandon thee, let this play of shadows, this constant shifting of the sublunary scene, strengthen thy spirit in self-dependence, and lead thee closer to what is eternally true and lasting, — to God.

Wherefore weepest thou, sorrowing widow, by the coffin of thy husband? And thou, faithful child, on the grave of thy father, thy friend? And thou, disconsolate mother, by the bier of thy infant? What is it that they bear to the grave? Is it not merely the mortal coil? Or can spirits die and moulder away in the ground? Why fixest thou thine eyes, sore with weeping, on the earth? Ah! that which hath fled from thee, that which thy eye seeketh, is not there! Lift thine eyes to heaven, let them penetrate the boundless universe! Thy friend is there. The mysterious power which animated the dust, and which we call soul, the same that so often smiled lovingly

on thee through tender eyes, that spoke to thee from friendly lips, now with solemn earnestness, now with joyful mirth, — it has gone to God, is with God, has entered into more glorious connections, into higher spheres of action, is more elevated, freer, happier, more perfect than thou! Why, then, turn thine eyes upon the grave? The ashes that lie buried there were only a borrowed raiment, did not belong to the immortal being, — were but an instrument useful for a short time here below, now no longer needed. The soul has finished its course in this world, has fought the fight, and kept its faith. Henceforth it wears the crown of immortality! Man thyself, O mourner, and thou, also, prepare to fight the good fight. The loved one whom thou hast lost will one day advance to meet thee at the gate of eternity, to greet thee as a glorified companion, and will cry unto thee: Here, also, God is thy God!

O God! O Father! Thou art also my God, my Father; why, then, should I be bowed down with grief? Why weakly yield myself up before my course is finished, before I have fought the good fight to the end? Oh, give me strength, give me power! Whatever suffering Thou mayst impose, I will bear it, for it will bring me nearer to Thee!

Father, for each earthly pleasure
Heartfelt thanks from me receive, —
Thanks, should grief o'erflow the measure,
Father, still to thee I give.
Shouldst Thou take them both from me,
Yet more gladly praise I Thee.

In the sweet and smiling spring,
When true friends around me stand,
Though each hour new joys may bring,
Hopes fulfilled as soon as planned, —

Yet I sadly seem to see
All earth's joys are vanity.

What to Earth and Time, though bright,
Is the joy that can enchain?
No, my spirit strives with might
Immortality to gain.
Only *one pure* joy I see, —
Holy, and in God to be.

Soon, oh soon! shall all be done,
Peaceful rest I, Lord, in Thee;
Thousands have the victory won,
I, too, shall win the victory.
More loudly yet than thunder's voice,
My heart outcries, Believe, rejoice!

Yes, I believe, till life shall close,
The God I trust will ne'er forsake.
On Him, in hope, will I repose,
Although the last fond tie should break.
Can I but hold Him for my own,
Then shall I never stand alone.

Look, Lord, with pity on my tears,
Behold my cares, — my fallen state;
Comforter, come, relieve my fears.
Oh, I am left so desolate!
Sustain me, Helper; ease my smart;
Send joy and peace into my heart.

And yet, O Father, not my will,
But thine alone, be done on me.
Though, like the patient Jesus, still
I wander through Gethsemane,
At last, my God, when all is done,
The glorious guerdon shall be won.

THE SICK.

In silence will I bear the pain
Which God has sent me by his will, —
Ne'er will I murmur nor complain;
Although He wound, He loves me still.
In sickness not the less God's child
Than if the world around me smiled.
True to Himself, God changes never, —
Wise, mighty, merciful, forever.

(MATT. XXV. 36.)

AMONG the manifold misfortunes that may befall humanity, the loss of health is one of the severest. All the joys that life can give cannot outweigh the sufferings of the sick. Give the sick man everything, and leave him his sufferings, and he will feel that half the world is lost to him. Lay him on a soft, silken couch, he will nevertheless groan sleepless under the pressure of his sufferings; while the miserable beggar, blessed with health, sleeps sweetly on the hard ground. Spread his tables with dainty meats and choice drinks, and he will thrust back the hand that proffers them, and envy the poor man who thoroughly enjoys his dry crust. Surround him with the pomp of kings, let his chair be a throne, and his crutch a world-swaying sceptre; he will look with contemptuous eye on marble, on gold, and on purple, and would deem himself happy could he enjoy, even were it under a thatched roof, the health of the meanest of his servants.

Hence the sight of a sick person is painful to all.

Who can behold without pity and emotion the wan cheek, the dimmed eye, and the emaciated form? Even the rude warrior checks his ruthless passion at this sight, and spares the sufferer.

A sick person is a sacred object to every Christian, and ought to be so. Even levity grows earnest at the side of the sick-bed.

Perhaps thou wert once thyself such a pitiable object; if so, remember the days of thy suffering. Thou didst then gain great and weighty experiences. Come with me in spirit now to the bedside of a languishing fellow-being, and renew there the thoughts and resolves of those days.

But if thou hast not yet learnt what it is to lose health, the day may come when thou shalt make that sad experience. Prepare thyself like a sage against that time of trial. Learn to love the sick and to nurse them with tender care, that thou, like them, mayst one day be thus honored and tended.

Disease is not necessarily connected with life. Originally man was made perfect in all his parts. Thousands go through life without ever having experienced any derangement of their physical organization. To them even approaching death brings no illness. They die because the last drop of life's oil in their lamp has been consumed; they sleep away in sweet weariness, like the reaper in autumn when his daily task is completed.

If we have not inherited the germs of disease from our parents, it is generally to our own imprudence or thoughtlessness that may be attributed the loss of life's best gift, — the health of our bodies, — the partial destruction of the instrument through which our souls are to work and do useful service.

In every case, observe the nature of thy body, and regulate thy life accordingly. Observe its laws in thy nourishment, thy drink, thy pleasures, and thy mode of working in thy vocation. Never forget that one single hour of intemperance may be the parent of long years of suffering. Never forget that one moment of guilty self-forgetfulness in the midst of joy suffices to poison thy cup of bliss.

Man's body is not his inalienable possession ; it is a loan from the hand of God, which we shall one day have to give up, — an instrument of the spirit, without which the latter cannot fulfill its appointed work on earth. If man deserve punishment for sin, then assuredly he deserves it when he sins against his own body ; for he thereby robs himself of the joy of life, and of the capacity, for a long time, and perhaps forever, of doing as much good as he might otherwise do.

Not only do we, by carelessness of our health, render ourselves incapable of fulfilling adequately our duties to God, our country, and our fellow-citizens, to strangers, and to friends ; but we may even, though subsequently apparently restored to health, in reality have hastened the approach of the hour of death. The man wanting in moderation — whether it be, that with careless presumption he expose himself unnecessarily to danger, or that by exaggerated care he render himself over-delicate — may be said to be a self-murderer, though against his will and desire.

Again, the germs of disease are often transmitted from parents to children : the maladies of one generation thus become the ailments and sufferings of a distant posterity. Therefore guard reverently the health of your bodies, that your children may not

one day upbraid you with their diseases; that the follies of one brief moment of your existence may not become a source of misery to your children's children! It is this that the Scriptures allude to, when they say, the sins of parents are punished unto the third and fourth generation.

Often place yourself, in spirit, by the bedside of the sick. It may be to you a school of wisdom. When the sunken eye and deathly pallor of the poor sufferer make you tremble, the resolve will be strengthened in you to avoid everything that may injure your own health.

But watch not only over thyself; watch also over the health of thy companions. Tempt not others to immoderate pleasures; lead them not into dissipation that may breed disease. What satisfaction will it be to thee, when thou hast robbed them of the sweet bloom of health, when thou hast become, as it were, the destroyer of their best joy in life?

Nevertheless, this is a point in regard to which even good people, without malice and without premeditation, but in the tumult of pleasure, so frequently err. Their example and their encouragement excite weaker persons to indulge in undue gratifications. In the very endeavor to give their friend a proof of affection, they frequently become his poisoner, his destroyer. Neither the malice nor the cruelty of man is so dangerous as his thoughtless levity.

Honor, O Christian, in thyself as in others, the sanctity of health! Perform towards the sick the holy duty of benevolence!

Be a friend to the sick, as was Jesus, that sublime example of what we ought and what we ought not to be. Did He not go, with helping hand, to the bed

side of the sick? Was it not He who lovingly called unto Him the lame and the blind, the leper and the man sick of the palsy? Was He not the refuge of all sufferers? Did they not let themselves be carried unto Him, when they learnt that the Divine Friend of suffering humanity was nigh? Thou, who callest thyself Christian, be a Christian in truth, — follower of Jesus, be what Jesus was!

It is true, thy hand can perform no miracle; but it can perform acts of kindness. Thy arm cannot raise up the hopelessly sick, and place him again in the blooming realm of health, nor can it stay death; but it can lovingly support the weak. At thy bidding, it is true, all pains will not vanish; but thy words may comfort, may give counsel and cheerfulness to one whom every earthly joy fails because he lacks health.

“I have been sick, and ye have not visited me!” will be the words of Jesus to those who have uncharitably left the sick without tender care.

Help, more especially, the poor sick stranger! Those that are at home will be tended by their sorrowing relatives. The rich will not lack nursing, for every one will be willing to minister to them, and they have the means of procuring for themselves all that they require, and everything that may tend to soothe their sufferings. But who is there to minister to the poor? Perhaps not even an unfeeling hireling. Who is there to take care of the suffering stranger? Ah, perhaps, no one, while his brothers and sisters are grieving over him at a distance.

You often long to be able to do some good. You think, perhaps, that when you have charitably given alms to the beggar in the street, you have done enough. But how little is this! God has given you

more, far more than this; and yet how helpless and poor did you not come into the world? Go, and give more than alms. Remember the words of Jesus, and let them resound in your hearts: "What ye have done to the least of these, ye have done to me."

Go forth and visit the abode of poverty and misery, and behold there the hungering father and the starving mother on the comfortless bed of sickness, with no one to nurse them, no one to advise, without a doctor and without medicine, surrounded by terrified and weeping children: there is the post of honor for thee; there is the field in which thou art called to sow blessed seeds for eternity; there is the path that will lead thee to glory. If God have bestowed upon thee in rich measure, or even in moderation, the goods of this earth, then seek out the poor families in thy neighborhood; inquire how they live; find out if there be any sick among them, and if so, be thou their ministering angel!

In many cases the alms which you fling to a professional beggar in the street are no more than an encouragement to his laziness, a premium to his want of thrift and order. But could you behold with your eyes the interior of many a poor home, those eyes would weep tears of blood. It would startle you to discover such nameless misery in a hovel at the side of the pomp and luxury of the neighboring palace. You would shudder at the thought that, in a Christian city, there could be so much unalleviated suffering, — so much unknown sorrow among so many thousands of joyful beings. Though the sick Lazarus, covered with sores, may not in our day always be found outside the rich man's door, endeavoring to stay his hunger with the crumbs that fall from the

rich man's table, he may be found in a dwelling close by, where his groans are heard by the omnipresent God alone.

If it be in thy power, remember the sick stranger with charitable institutions for his benefit. It was one of the most praiseworthy customs of our forefathers that, when blessed with riches, they applied part of these to founding pious and charitable institutions. God bestowed upon them bountiful superfluity, and by their last testaments they gratefully returned a share of it to God. Their pious hearts, which called God the Father of all, were open to love of their poorer fellow-men ; and when the time came, the needy were found numbered among their heirs.

In many places, this excellent, truly Christian custom is only occasionally followed ; in others, it has ceased to exist. Our fathers died ; but to this day thousands of sick persons, who are nursed in the institutions founded by their benevolence, send up grateful prayers for their unknown and long deceased benefactors. Will future generations pray thus for us ? O ye wealthy of the earth, your children's children will glance with indifference at the marble mausoleums you have erected for yourselves. They will smile contemptuously at the futile vanity which made you surround yourselves with pomp even in the grave. A grateful tear shed by a poor sufferer who had been relieved in an institution which perpetuated your kindness, even after your death, would have been of more worth than the cold drop which the artist's chisel fashions on the marble statue above your graves. This tear will crumble away with the stone in which it is cut ; the poor man's tear will be registered in heaven.

Let us return to the good old custom of our fathers ; let us remember on our bed of sickness those helpless sufferers who have no one to take care of them as we have ; and let us contribute to allay their pains, even after God has put an end to ours.

Honor, wherever thou meetest them, the sufferings of thy sick fellow-creature. Wert thou not his friend before, become so when he suffers. Wert thou even once his enemy, go to him, and be reconciled. If he have offended thee, go to him and pardon him his trespass, that he may part from thee and from life with a more cheerful spirit. If he have reason to be angered with thee, go to him and seek his forgiveness. Let no one depart from thee in anger, that in eternity there may be no being willing to stand forth and accuse thee.

Sooner or later thou mayest thyself be thrown upon a bed of sickness. No balm, no draught will then be so potent to soothe as the thought that no fellow-being bears anger against thee ; that though many a kind heart will send a sigh of regret after thee into eternity, not one will curse thee !

Glorify thy Christian faith in thy hour of suffering, by patience and pious resignation to the will of thy Creator, who has ever guided thee, and who will be thy guide henceforward as heretofore. And glorify thy faith in God's providence by quiescent trust, and calm abiding, and cheerful resignation. Wish not for dissolution, neither fear the quiet sleep of death. Millions have died before thee, millions will die after thee ; it is the Divine law that rules the universe ; it is for the good of the world. Thou hast indeed died many a time already. As often in thy life as thou hast fallen asleep, thou hast tasted death, for it is but

the last sleep. It is not thyself that sleepest away, but only thy body. Thy soul sleepeth not ; it keeps vigil with God, it lives near Him, it draws nigh to more blissful spheres, and smiles at its own past fears.

And suppose thy illness should not prove deadly, but that thou art destined to recover. Is this, then, so great a happiness ? Thou wilt step back from the open grave only to approach it again in a few years. Thy earthly dream will be prolonged for a few moments, and thy entrance into the glory of the better world which awaits thee, according to Jesus's promise, will be delayed for a few days.

Even on thy bed of sickness, cease not thy works of charity. Even on thy bed of sickness, do good without ceasing. Shouldst thou in the days of health have neglected to do it, do it now while there is yet time. Let not a day of thy life pass by without an act of Christian love. The remembrance of thy well-doing will be thy happiness in death.

But in sickness as in health, at all times alike, the true Christian is ready to exchange the transitory for the eternal. Not that it would be right to dwell constantly upon the subject of death. Nay, it would be folly to mar by sad thoughts the many blessings which we receive here below from the bountiful hand of God. But live as if thou wert to be called away from this world suddenly and unexpectedly. Prepare thy soul that it may be ready to depart at any moment. Put thy house in order, that, when sickness and death overtake thee, thou shalt be found to have fulfilled thy every duty towards those that depend on thee. Put thy house in order. Attend at all times to thy avocations with such care and fidel-

ity, that thy relatives, when they lose thee, may not have to sustain a double loss, — a twofold trial. When in health, thou providest for those that belong to thee with tender solicitude ; but reflect, would they be provided for, if, this very day, some untoward accident should suddenly tear thee from them, and to-morrow they should stand alone with tearful eyes, without thee to lean upon ? Flatter not thyself with the hope that thou wilt have time during long and lingering illness to put thy house in order. Dost thou not each week see men called away in the prime of their manhood ? Dost thou not see others whom protracted illness has deprived of all power and desire to attend to serious business ?

The true Christian proves himself such by being ever ready, ever prepared in all his relations, whether as a citizen of this world or of eternity. He passes cheerfully and composedly through life, for his accounts, both as regards this world and the next, are at all times made up.

Thus let it be with me, my God and Father ! The best Christian is the greatest man on earth. He looks with equal calm to the past and to the future ; he stands in equally happy relations to both. He is a true hero, for while gratefully enjoying the pleasures of life which Thou, O Father, vouchsafest to him, his spirit dwelleth in anticipation in the realms of eternity. He is above every accident, for none can take him by surprise ; he is greater than any fate that may befall him, for trusting in Thee, O my God, his spirit soars above all sublunary things.

Such let me be, let me become ! Let my death be such that it may teach others how to live ; and let my life be such that it may teach others how to die

joyfully ! Thus lived, thus died, my Saviour, — He who won heavenly bliss for me, Jesus, my divine teacher. He was the faithful friend of the sick, — their adviser, their comforter. I will be the same, as far as my feeble powers will allow.

Yea, Father ! be Thou my relief ;
My comforter in pain and grief, —
 Make sickness' self a gain to me ;
Draw my heart, all sad hearts that bleed,
Through all their pangs, in every need,
 Unto thy love, and unto Thee.

Jesus ! to Thee my heart appeals, —
Oh, help ! for Thou art He who heals.
 The sorest pain canst Thou make light,
Our sickness e'en Thou send'st to bless, —
Thou art our refuge in distress,
 Our tears are ever in thy sight.

To Thee my trust, my faith, shall hold.
Oh, never let my love wax cold,
 Health, sickness, whatsoe'er befall.
Then can no pangs my spirit shake,
I joy to bear them for thy sake.
 My grateful heart gives thanks for all.

A FORETASTE OF HEAVEN.

PART I.

Let everything that liveth praise the Lord! —
Deep in our spirit the responsive chord
Awakes devotion, and a holy joy
Which knoweth no alloy.

Try Him, and prove Him, and see how bountiful He is.
Truth and compassion, tender love, are his.
Reigning forever, o'er us and around,
Still is his mercy found.

Let everything that loveth love the Lord!
High on his throne, by all the saints adored,
Seraph and cherub, — all the heavenly host, —
Happiest, who love Him most.

Thirst then, *our* souls, like the blest souls above
Holy and happy, evermore to love
Him who created us, who keeps us still
By his most gracious will.

All hail! We love Him evermore. The dust
Loves its Consoler, puts in Him its trust.
All eager longings He will satisfy,
Tears He himself will dry.

(MATT. v. 8.)

I WILL lift myself out of the slough of this world,
I will rise above the storms of this life, and lay
hold on those higher things that afford lasting peace
of mind, indestructible happiness. What is to me
the noisy tumult of the world, amid which I never
feel perfectly satisfied, — where every light has its
shadow, and where every joy has its attendant woe?
Can I there live entirely to myself, entirely possess

myself? No, I am there the victim of every evil; of care, and trouble, and vain wishes, of wrecked hopes, of sad events, and of wearisome pleasures. I am never less lonely than when, alone, engaged in silent meditation, I lift up my soul to Thee, Lord of all destinies. I pity those who have never enjoyed such an hour, and happily their number is small; for even to the most frivolous worldling there comes at length a moment — perhaps, indeed, it comes sooner to him than to others — when pleasure palls upon him, when he feels society a burden, or, at least, when he derives but little gratification from it; when he yearns for something different, when, meditating on the worthlessness of the life of trifling he leads, he begins to have a presentiment of a better state, and ardently to desire it.

And yet he fails to lay hold on it. For it seems to him incredible that it should be in the bosom of the highest wisdom, in the sanctity of religion, that he is to seek for it. Religion, as he feels it, inspires him with too little respect. It is to him no more than a confused medley of vague and disjointed sentences and precepts, which have remained in his memory since childhood, but which he has never reflected upon or endeavored to systematize. He wonders that people should affect to find therein matters of such importance, and perhaps he smiles compassionately at their folly; and he returns, though with failing heart, to his former mode of life, to his accustomed amusements, soon again to weary of them, and soon again to feel that he has no joy in such existence.

So far, indeed, he is right: the disconnected fragments of Biblical phrases learnt by rote in childhood, which he calls his religion, and which he discards

from his thoughts the moment the church service (which he attends merely because it is customary so to do) is over, that is in truth a poor religion. But this has no affinity with the religion which Jesus the Messiah revealed to us. His religion is not a matter of memory, nor a matter of routine, but a living power of God in the human soul.

However, thousands drag on through life in this way, following their craft, their art, their trade, their studies; allowing themselves, in times of war as in times of peace, to be consumed by fleeting pleasures and long-enduring pains. They commit their happiness, their contentment, to the rule of chance; believe that they can after all do nothing towards securing it themselves; and are totally ignorant that it is in man's power to be lastingly happy,—to enjoy, here on earth already, a foretaste of heaven. At length, possibly, they learn to despise all pleasures, and sometimes become discontented grumblers whom nothing can satisfy,—haters of their kind, and despisers of their own life, because they have not learnt to know true pleasure.

There are again others, wiser than these, who, strengthened by religion, or animated and exalted by nobler sentiments, do not deny the value of this worldly life. But they deplore the fleeting character of all pleasure. "I also was at one time thoroughly happy, and enjoyed a foretaste of heaven," say many. "I seemed to be steeped in happiness. But—how soon did not my dream vanish! Yes, it was but a dream, and now it lies far behind me in the realm of the past, like a fading shadow. Soon the very memory of it will be almost lost to me. I shall then continue my way through the monotonous dullness of every-day life, as through a desert."

Let every man take a retrospect of the days that lie behind him, reflect upon them, and then ask himself: "Which period of my life was the happiest? Which was the sweetest moment I ever enjoyed?"

Many of us will at once recall to mind the innocent days and delights of childhood, those days when life was colored with the rosy light of morn. Then the merest trifle seemed a treasure, a flower was a jewel in our estimation, and a walk our greatest happiness. Everything was invested in our eyes with a higher significance; our own joyous souls seemed to infuse themselves even into the lifeless things that surrounded us, and we talked to and loved objects that could not return our affection. With happy carelessness we skipped over the thorns in our path, and whatever wounded us was forgotten as soon as the tear was dry that the pain had called forth. Oh, what brilliant prospects all thoughts of the future then conjured up! What great expectations did not others entertain in regard to us, and did we not ourselves entertain as to what we should perform in later years! "Yes; that was the happiest period of my life!" many will exclaim.

I believe it; yet, when I look nearer into the matter, it seems to me that each age has its own pleasure which God has ordained for our enjoyment. It cannot be our destiny to remain children forever,—who indeed would wish it to be so? Who would desire to return to that dream of the past, out of which we see every child longing to emerge, that it may take part in the pleasures of an older age? It would be sad were there no higher felicity in life than that of the child, for that we can never recall. It seems to me that that only can be the highest happiness

which each human being may, with a resolute will, renew at any time.

But let us examine more closely what constituted our happiness when we were children. Was it the outward things that surrounded us? Was it riches, pomp, and honors? Ah, no! Seated on a heap of sand, we thought ourselves richer than kings; with a few boards we built ourselves palaces; a little picture would fill us with delight. Why was this? Surely the source of these joys lay *within* us, not in the outward world. We were *content* with what we possessed, and, like the bee, we sucked honey even from the lowliest flower. We took no care for the morrow; for we believed that each day had its own joys, and we thought only of the present. If we had raiment and food sufficient, we asked not for more. We had light hearts; and although we knew then, in reference to the smaller things of life, as well as we do now, in reference to the greater, that much that was disagreeable had to be encountered, that many tears would necessarily be shed, that many fears would be excited, yet we never dwelt long on what occasioned us dissatisfaction; but, on the contrary, only felt the happier for having escaped from some cause of fear, only rejoiced the more when we had been relieved from some state of pain. For this reason we seldom repined. We were joyous because we anticipated not evil, *because our hearts were pure and our consciences unburdened*. Let us recall to mind the bitterest moments of our childhood! Were they not those in which we had for the first time done wrong, and in which we feared discovery, and looked forward with trembling to the punishment that awaited us? But this very fear served as a cor-

rection. We resisted the sin the next time it lured us. When the punishment had been submitted to, the guilt expiated, we again skipped merrily through life.

Alas ! wherefore have we forgotten the wisdom of our youth ? wherefore have we become more full of folly in old age than when we were in childhood ? Wherefore do we with unpardonable self-deception, instead of seeking our happiness and welfare *within ourselves*, expect it from circumstances that lie beyond us, and which after all only assume, in regard to us, the character with which we ourselves invest them ? Why do our thoughts attach themselves with senseless obstinacy to all that is disagreeable, rather than to that which is innocently pleasurable ? Why are our hearts no longer so contented as at that time, when we extracted pleasures from trifles ? Why is our position not sufficiently exalted, our income not sufficiently large, our apparel, our furniture, not costly enough, although all are far better than the humble cottage that once satisfied us ? Why is it that we are forever troubled by a secret and never-ceasing anxiety, a restless consciousness of wrong ? Why is it that we never enjoy a pleasure without being aware of some admixture of bitterness in it ?

Because we have deserted the wisdom that belongs to the age of childhood. Neither the world, nor the people that surround us, have changed since then ; the change is in ourselves. We have been untrue to ourselves, and have attached ourselves to outward things as though they could give us back the lost happiness ; and we pursue them with blind ardor, yet never feel the bliss of former days. It is not an angel, but our own vanity, ambition, covetousness,

and luxuriousness, our own pride, cunning, envy, and hatred, that have driven us forth from the paradise of youth. "Except ye become as little children," said Jesus Christ, the wisest of the wise, "ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven."

If, therefore, thou believest the period of thy early youth to have been the happiest of thy life, forget not why it was so. It depends upon thyself whether the heaven of thy childhood shall spread over thy later days also. Become again what thou wert then; simple, pious, forgiving, loving, content with little, and the foretaste of heaven which thou then enjoyed, thou wilt again experience. Thou wilt then understand Jesus, the wisest of the wise, whose words thou hast, perhaps, often perused, but without entirely comprehending their deep wisdom.

There are, however, many persons whose happiness in childhood has been disturbed by sickness, by the cruelty of a step-father or a step-mother, or by other misfortunes, and who cannot, therefore, reckon those years among their happiest. But if thou belongest to these, which was the most delightful period of the other portion of thy life? Perhaps that in which thy heart first opened to love, when the privileged day had come, and as youth, or as maiden, thou madest thy first independent step in the world. Thou still rememberest those hours of sweet reverie, thy hopes, thy longings. Heaven and earth seemed to grow brighter under the influence of the inexpressible feelings which then moved thy heart. Thy every thought was devoted to the beloved object. Everything connected with it assumed higher value in thine eyes. A look was enough to make thee happy; the simplest gift was prized by thee above a

crown ; the first flower received from the hand of thy beloved thou wouldst not have exchanged for the costliest jewel. Thou didst enter a second time the heaven of thy childhood, but with new feelings, with a new spirit. What a divine halo seemed spread around everything, and how full of noble virtues the beloved object ! How often in thy humility thou didst deem thyself unworthy of the love granted thee ! How earnestly thou strovest to improve thyself, and to please by higher qualities ! How much bliss was there not often in thy sorrow, and how much comfort even in thy pains ! What elevated resolves passed at that period through thy soul ! How thou didst blush at every vice, at every impure thought and action !

“I, also, was once in paradise !” cry many, in whom the memory of those by-gone days is revived. “I was full of happiness ! And yet it was no more than a delirium of the imagination, a foolish self-delusion. Too soon, alas ! I awoke from my dream, and, when more calm, I perceived that the many perfections I had beheld in the beloved object, either did not exist at all, or only in very small measure.”

Yes, such was thy experience ; but, nevertheless, those days count among the happiest of thy earthly existence. Where, then, was the source of the bliss that filled thy heart ? It was not in the *outer* world, — for thou hast just confessed that thou hadst deceived thyself ; nay, the heavenly being that thou lovedst was *within* thee, and thou didst paint its image on the outer world. Thou didst love the perfect, noble duty, the grace of goodness, the sublimity of truth, — not perfidy, not vainglory, not riches, not rank. Thou lovedst, and thy love lent beauty even to the defects of its object.

The awakening of first love is but a revival of the innocence of youth, and of the reverence for the divine element in the nature of man ! And that divine element which thou reverest was in thyself, and thou now callest it delusion, because thou failedst to find out of thyself that ideal of every perfection that thou believedst to have discovered within thyself.

Why hast thou never since then enjoyed an equal measure of happiness ? Why hast thou cast away with the delusion, the bliss-inspiring love of the Divine and the Perfect ? Why hast thou not sought the ideal within thyself, since thou couldst not find it elsewhere ? Why dost thou not exert thy powers to gain for thyself that rare perfection, that grace of goodness, that sublimity of truth, the conception of which caused thee so much delight ? Why dost thou cease to adorn thyself, as before, with nobler qualities in order to please thy beloved ? Why dost thou not now, as then, shun everything impure, every vicious passion, every vice ? If thou didst, thou wouldst still be full of bliss, for the world would honor thee, and the approval of God would raise thee above all the pains of earth. Ah, degenerate man ! hadst thou remained true to thy youthful ideal of perfection, thou wouldst even to this day enjoy a foretaste of heaven !

But thou hast been untrue to thyself, to the nobler nature within thee. Thou didst not find in others all the perfections which thou worshipped ; and in consequence thou forgottest thyself, thou becamest base and bad as others, perhaps even worse than they. To this dost thou owe that thy heaven has fled from thee.

O Lord, my God, Creator of the heavenly bliss enjoyed on earth, I also was once full of bliss, and I

enjoyed the foretaste of higher things. Ah ! in like manner as Thou gavest it to the first human being, made in thine image, Thou bestowest to this day with inexhaustible bounty a paradise on each earth-born soul. How long he shall retain it depends upon himself. It is his as long as he remains virtuous, as long as he does thy will, as long as he continues to be pure in heart, as long as he does not desecrate the Divine element within himself. But the impure desire for outward happiness drives him out of his Eden, and he sees Thee no longer. His eyes are fixed greedily on the goods of this lower world, as are those of the unreasoning brute, instead of being uplifted to the heavenly gift, as beseems those who are made in thine image.

A second time the way to the lost paradise has been opened to us, by Thee, O blessed One who took pity on the world, Saviour, Divine Teacher, by Thee and by thy word ! Why do we close our ears against thy voice ? The greatest desire of all men is to be perfectly happy ; in the days of childhood, and of sweet adolescence, the magic power of virtue affords us a foretaste of the highest bliss ; — why do we not, O Jesus, truly understand the wisdom in thy words : “ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God ” ?

A FORETASTE OF HEAVEN.

PART II.

If I trust in God alone,
If I feel He is mine own,
If my heart until I die
Ne'er forget his constancy,
Naught of sorrow can I know,
Feel naught but love, devotion, joy o'erflow.

If in Him my soul is blest,
Willingly I leave the rest;
Tread in faith my pilgrim road,
Trusting only in my God.
Earthly troubles, faint and dim,
Fade into nothing while I rest on Him.

Where in God's own sight I stand,
There only is my fatherland;
Every gift He sends me thence
Is proof of my inheritance.
Kindred and friends long mourned in vain,
With youth renewed, there shall I meet again.

(ROM. v. 3.)

YEA, I know it, I believe it, and I feel it; I see it in every event of my life, in the various destinies of my fellow-creatures, in all the splendid works of nature, — that sublime and eternal temple of God, — that the all-loving Father has created us children of the earth for perfect happiness, that we may already here below enjoy a foretaste of heavenly bliss; but that the source of our delights, as the source of our pains, is in our own bosoms, — springs from our virtues or our vices.

How unutterably happy must not the man feel whose heart has not one thing to upbraid him with in respect to any of his relations in life; who does not permit his mind to be unduly disturbed by cares of any kind; who does not allow either unbridled anger, or unrestrained affection, to lead him into any excess! In him dwells a sublime calm, of which ordinary men can hardly form a conception, — that calm which is the true peace of God.

Have you ever passed a fine spring morning alone amid the new-born beauties of nature? When, at such a time, you have been roving in the shade of peaceful groves, through the green canopy of which the rosy waves of sunlight broke; when the soft breath of morn was wafted across the verdant landscape, and the numberless flowerets shivered, and the dew on the leaflets glittered in the tears of joy which heaven had shed at the holiness and goodness of the Creator; and the cascade leaping from the rock, and the river in its bed, and the forest on the hill, sent forth solemn murmurs; while high up above, and deep down below, the air resounded with the wonderful song of birds and the buzzing of insects, — oh what were your feelings? Did not a sense of inexpressible delight flash through your bosom? You drew a deep breath; your body seemed etherealized; you felt as if you must join your voice to the voices of the air, as if you must mix your tears with the tears of heaven; you longed for the wings of rosy morn to soar up high into the empyrean, or to sink into the green depths of the forests, or to lose yourself in the blue haze that veiled the unknown distance. You longed to pour your love through the entire world.

Did you ever lie down on the top of a mountain, whence you beheld a wide landscape with its fields and cottages spread in silent repose before your eyes? In your bosom also perfect quiet reigned! You forgot all your domestic cares; no sorrow weighed on your spirits, no unpleasant remembrance disturbed the beneficent calm, no passion dared to intrude to break the holy peace of your soul, and a voice within whispered, "Blessed were I, could I forever remain thus!" What you then felt was a fleeting foretaste of heaven, which sometimes even passionate, unquiet spirits are allowed to enjoy, in order that they may look into themselves, and earnestly reflect how they might perpetuate this tranquil and blessed state. What you then felt was the peace of God, which the virtuous and wise, which the true followers of Christ, experience even in the midst of the greatest tribulation, and which raises them above it. You were happy in the moments alluded to, because you learnt then to forget yourselves, because you were free from the mundane desires which regained possession of you as soon as you reëntered your homes. But woe to him who, in order thoroughly to enjoy life, must learn to forget himself! This is a proof, either that his heart is burdened with the consciousness of many sins, or that it is oppressed with cares and unsatisfied wants, springing from his vanity, his frivolity, his covetousness, or other impure tendencies; or that when he acts, he does not act wisely, and that what he possesses he does not possess with wisdom; but that he allows himself to be consumed by a thousand vain and petty cares, and creates for himself sorrows which he will eventually discover to have been unnecessary.

The true disciple of Jesus never needs to forget himself in order to be cheerful in his very innermost soul. On the contrary, it is when he examines his inward being, and his relations to the Father of all life, that he feels most happy. The present day may have its storms, but the future only smiles the more brightly to him. He is with God, and God is with him. Whether he be of high or humble station, rich or poor, praised or blamed, to him it is all the same ; for the source of his happiness is not in the outward world, but within himself. And he is with God, and God is with him. And "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," here already, in their foretaste of the higher bliss of heaven.

Almost every stage of human life has its heavenly moments, in which mortal man feels himself, as it were, involuntarily raised above himself. Not what we possess or what we earn, not what we eat and drink, not our apparel, not what men think of us, but a pure heart is the true source of happiness.

Have you witnessed, or have you read of how persecuted innocence has been rescued? how some meritorious benevolent man was long misjudged, and overwhelmed with accusations by his enemies, until at length the world learnt to see its own injustice, and every one sought to make some amends? Do you recollect how that recognition of long oppressed innocence made your heart swell with emotion ; how a quiet joy took possession of you, as though it were your own innocence that had been vindicated ; how the happiness of that virtue which had at length received its reward called tears of silent satisfaction into your eyes? On that occasion, you shared, in spirit, with the person whose innocence was made

manifest, a foretaste of heaven. It was from your own virtuous feelings that sprang the joy you experienced. It was the germs of true happiness within you that were moved ; it was the source of your eternal welfare that began to flow. Ah ! why did you choke up this spring with the rubbish of lower desires and petty cares ? Why did you not put forth your full strength to rise in future above all low tendencies, and make a resolve to remain forever the elevated being you were during those brief moments of emotion ?

Childhood has its Eden. Adolescence has its hours of paradise. But at a later age also we behold from time to time a ray, as if from a better world, flashing across our path, and lighting up the commonplace things around us. These are foretastes of heaven, which Providence sends to poor mortals, to stimulate them to strive after that which can alone render lasting such blissful moments.

Hast thou known the feelings of a mother kindled by the smile of her child standing before her in the fresh bloom of its loveliness and grace ? when in silent but holy love she bends over this angel of her life, and seems with her kisses to draw its pure soul over into her own ? Hast thou known the delight of a father, when he beholds for the first time the newborn babe that owes its existence to him ? when the infant smiles upon him for the first time ? when the joyous child lisps its first word ? when he sees it growing in health, industry, and virtue ? Ah ! the delights of those heavenly moments he would not exchange for all the treasures of the world ! and the mother, too, feels this most deeply, and says, “ Take all else from me, and I am nevertheless blessed ! ”

Queens may be inexpressibly miserable, and beggar-women unutterably happy!

Such feelings are vibrations of the purest chords of the heart. Alas! why do we so often leave them untouched? What is it that draws us all so irresistibly towards the sweet world of childhood? What is the hidden power which, at the sight of an infant, moves even the barbarian, and which wins at once the stranger's heart? It is the guileless trust, the sweet innocence, the winning grace of childhood, that charms us. It is the spotless purity of the angelic nature; it is the vague anticipation of a brilliant future for the child, and of how deservedly — should these young beings preserve their purity and their virtues in a later age — they will become objects of the world's devotion. We honor in the child the undesecrated sanctuary of the heart, which as yet has no presentiment of evil. It is not the outward form, it is not flesh and blood, that excites our love and admiration; but the purity, the something Divine that speaks to us from the frank and open eye, the ingenuous countenance of the child. It is our own inborn sense of virtue, which, unconscious to ourselves, animates us at such moments. In the intercourse with the innocent little ones, we ourselves become more innocent, more noble and more wise; we are ashamed to appear before them in all our imperfections; and he who has not the courage to conquer his faults at least tries to conceal them. Verily, we may frequently learn more, improve more in wisdom and goodness, in the society of children, than in intercourse with the wisest of our acquaintance. "Suffer little children to come unto me," said Jesus; "for of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

The experience of every age thus proves and makes manifest, that the highest happiness of which man is capable does not depend upon whether he has much or little, but upon *whether he has a pure heart*. In the moments of his highest bliss his sense of virtue is always most strongly excited. In such moments he is good; he rises above selfishness, malice, false pretences, and impure desires. In such moments he willingly shares with others what he possesses, he would fain make the whole world happy; he forgives his mortal enemy, and embraces all mankind in his love.

It is the power of virtue that is strong within him, and that bears witness to the truth of Jesus' promise: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!*

Be pure of heart, and all the sources of heavenly bliss within you will be opened up, and you will enjoy constantly that foretaste of heaven which hitherto has only been vouchsafed to you in your highest moments. For they were your highest moments, simply because while they lasted you had risen to be better men. Why did you not remain ever what you were then? Why did you become untrue to yourselves?

You were untrue to yourselves in giving yourselves up again to the outward world, and expecting from it pleasures which it does not afford. You deliberately became unfaithful to yourselves, because you cared not to be masters of yourselves; but preferred surrendering the mastery to things which could in no way contribute to your peace of mind. You abandon yourselves to excessive care connected with your outward circumstances, forgetting that it is your inward condition that is the chief object of life, and

that when this is not what it ought to be, all outward honors, all comforts and luxuries, all pomp and grandeur, will be powerless to make you happy. Like madmen, you sacrifice life for death, peace of mind for constant anxiety, cheerfulness for sadness, the consciousness of innocence for pangs of conscience, the pride of independence for the shame of dependence, the sense of security for never-ceasing fears. Perhaps you have often sent up the prayer : " Give me, O God, a pure heart ; and let thy Holy Spirit inspire me." But no sooner was the prayer uttered than you again gave way to anger against your brother, than you again hypocritically deceived some unsuspecting person, than you again allowed a sufferer to leave you without being comforted, than you again began to amass money by unrighteous means, and allowed jealousy to fill your heart with hatred and malice. And what have you hitherto obtained in return for your many anxieties ? Perhaps physical infirmities, which prevent you from enjoying what other advantages may be yours ; perhaps a few more possessions than previously, but perhaps, also, fewer joys than when you had less worldly goods ; perhaps a post of honor which exposes you to malicious attacks of envy, and heaps upon you responsibilities and cares. Is that a foretaste of heaven ? Can these gains bear comparison with the happiness you enjoyed in those higher moments, when you possessed none of these, but when you were pure in heart, and your mind was free and fearless ?

He who is thoroughly happy within himself covets not other joys, asks for nothing more than to remain forever as he is. If outward circumstances make man happy, why then is he, even after he has attained the

desired end, ever craving for something better, something different? Why, then, is he always pursuing happiness as the child pursues the glowing colors of the rainbow, without ever reaching them?

Pause, wonder, reflect upon the heavenly hours thou hast enjoyed in life, and ask thyself how they came to thee. Not to rank, nor riches, nor fine clothes, nor meat, nor drink, didst thou owe them, but to thy pure heart. Thou wert a better man in those hours, and therefore all that surrounded thee was better. Abandon the mistaken road towards happiness, and strive again to possess that which alone can lead thee back to thy paradise.

Live with God in childlike purity. Never allow thyself to be too much absorbed in care for outward circumstances. Do thy duty, keep thy conscience clear; for all else trust in HIM who knows best what is good for us. Root out thy faults and evil tendencies; when a child thou hadst them not, and therefore thou wert happier then than now. First of all cast from thee the desires that cause thee most uneasiness; correct, by steadfast perseverance, those defects in thy disposition and thy conduct, which are the chief sources of disquietude to thee. Man has great, nay, incredible power over himself, if he will but exert it. Think not of gratifying thyself; but consider each day what good thou canst do to others. Demand what thou hast a right to; but, on the other side, never in the smallest way do injustice to others. And in order that thou mayest continue to improve, study earnestly the spirit and precepts of Jesus. In these thou wilt discover the highest wisdom, and from them learn the way back into thy lost paradise. There thou wilt find thy God again, and,

even in the severest trials of life, an inward peace, cheerfulness, bliss, of which no mortal can ever deprive thee. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!"

Merciful and eternal God, Love inexhaustible, Father of the universe, my Father! if I have but Thee, all that life may bring is but a shadowy phantasm. If I have but Thee, I shall pass without fear through light and through darkness, and shall find my way, and shall not falter, though want and death may threaten. If I have but Thee, I am sufficiently rich, though all fail me that others call riches; I am sufficiently exalted, though all the world look down upon me; I am strong enough, though thousands conspire against me; I am safe, though disasters may befall me, and all my earthly possessions be lost. If I have but Thee, death itself cannot rob me of my joy, should it even tear from my bleeding heart all the beloved souls to whom I am attached. Ah! death is *thy* angel messenger, he brings them to Thee, and in the bosom of thy love I shall find them again. If I have but Thee, I possess all things! Amen.

THE WORLD A MIRROR OF ETERNITY.

The Lord is King ! He reigns forever ;
The Lord is God ! He ceaseth never ;
He was, He e'er shall be, He is :
Who shall dare change what He commands ?
The universe rests in his hands, —
Fails He to hold, it perishes ; —
Yet still unconscious of decay,
The globe revolves from day to day ;
In the eternal seas of air
Floats yet this earthly ball, so seeming fair.

How long, ye nations, will ye try
His patience, "and his wrath defy" ?
Triflers on earth, his love forgot,
How long ere yet his anger burn, —
Omnipotent, although ye spurn
His power, and comprehend Him not, —
A Father and a Judge alike,
Though merciful, He yet can strike ;
The earth rests only on his will !
And ye, too, scorners ! — yet delays He still.

(1 COR. xiii. 12, 13.)

HOW gloriously does not the God, who beams upon us from the heavenly revelations of Jesus, harmonize with the wonderful God who majestically reveals himself to me and to all nations, at all periods of time, in the varying beauty and grandeur of nature ! Mysterious and grand He appears in his action on the world of spirits. Mysterious and grand in the order of the myriads of flaming worlds, which move in their eternally prescribed orbits, without ever diverging from their paths, or coming into collision. Mercifully He reigns in the realm of immortal spirits,

where his call to happiness penetrates all beings, and his justice rules; mercifully in the sublunary world, where his love is extended even to the lowliest creature.

The longer I consider and weigh the revelations of the Eternal Son, the longer I dwell upon the spectacle of the infinite creation, the more conscious I become of the proximity of God, the more vividly I feel: this is not mere mechanical activity. In all the forms of this sublunary world, through all the play of the hidden spiritual forces, there is revealed a will full of almighty power, an almighty power full of wisdom, a wisdom full of holiness, full of love, — and this is God. But the nature of God I cannot fathom. A God whose nature I could fathom would not be God, for even the nature of my own soul is a dark riddle to me. Seek not to know wherein consists the essence of the Highest Being; for the essence of even the meanest creature that He has made is an insoluble mystery to thee. Audacious mortal, the longer thou gazest at the dazzling brightness of the sun, the more it blinds thee!

Our knowledge here on earth is but partial, said St. Paul, the wise disciple of Jesus; “Now we see through a glass, darkly, but then we see face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I also am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” (1 Cor. xiii. 12, 13.)

Yea, this world, which is for a short time assigned to us as a habitation, is to me as a darkened mirror of eternity. I see here in part that which I shall one day behold with delight in its wonderful totality. What I hope here, will there be fulfilled; and

that which is here but an obscure foreshadowing, will there surround me as a bright reality. And the God of Life, whose glory I behold here only in reflection, will be revealed to me in full effulgence, when my immortal spirit shall be immersed in Him and in his bliss.

The world is to me a darkened mirror of eternity. That which I experience in detached fragments in this life betrays to me what I shall one day experience in a more perfect life. For in the divine creation all is unbroken unity ; all things are connected ; there is no interruption of continuity. In the chain of the infinite universe there are no missing links.

The here and the hereafter, life and eternity, are but ONE, form but ONE WHOLE, without interruption. Were my eyesight sufficiently strong, I should discover in the minute seed, which a single blade of grass suffices to conceal, the gigantic tree which at the end of a hundred years will overshadow a whole valley. In everything there is progress, development.

God has diffused throughout the wide universe a vital force, a secret power of animation. This all-animating power manifests itself on every side, yet how rarely do we notice it ! All things are imbued with it, and it is constantly renovating the form of whatever is undergoing dissolution. It acts with wonderful energy in the innermost germ of every seed, draws nourishment from all the elements, attracts towards itself the crumbling dust of ages, spreads fresh life through it, and produces a new plant, whose beauty charms us in spring, whose radiant colors dazzle our eyes, whose fragrance delights us, or whose fruits afford us delicious nourishment.

This vital force resides in every part of animal nature, so that the part is hardly separated from the whole, before, in the midst of decay, new life begins to develop itself.

Thus our earthly body likewise is imbued with this vital force. In every minute part of our bodies, also, the wonderful power diffused throughout the universe is at work. It is placed at the service of our spirit as long as the latter dwells in the body. For the benefit of the spirit it animates the delicate nerve tissues, and causes the blood to flow through the labyrinthine passages of the arteries and veins; for the benefit of the spirit it draws nourishment from the elements, brightens the eye, sucks in the fragrant breath of the flowers, and carries the tones of the outer world into the innermost recesses of the soul.

When, however, that which is immortal within us outstrips the earthly coil; when the thinking, freely willing, spontaneous power within us, which is subject to special laws of its own, and which we call our spirit, our real self, takes leave of the body, — then the vital power ceases to perform its functions, and the body perishes.

But, in the same manner as these forces and life-impulses always find new materials which they work into new forms, so also the noblest of all forces, the immortal spirit, called to freedom, to bliss, and to eternal endurance, doth clothe itself in a new vesture. It neither sleeps nor dies when its first body passes away; and it will not fail to find a new veil in which to shroud itself, when called, perhaps, to act more gloriously, more perfectly, in the sphere of eternal existence. It must be so, — for *naught perishes*. What is death? Nothing more than transformation.

The dead flower is transformed into dust, which in time becomes parts of other flowers. And in like manner as the blind life-force, acting according to the eternal laws of God, continues without ceasing, so also the free spirit of man, when relieved from its earthly coil. Thus this world is to us as a darkened mirror of eternity.

What eye can measure the boundless universe of God? The strongest telescope of the astronomer fails to discover its limits. Beyond all the stars or worlds which we discern through his instrument, we behold the faint gleams of the pale light of still more distant and unknown realms of space, which may be the reflection of still remoter stars, located in parts of the infinite universe which will ever remain hidden to man.

The wonderful rapidity with which light travels has been calculated; the relative distances have been measured between the sun and the planets that revolve round him, and which borrow their light from him; but to express the relative distances of the greater number of stellar systems, words and numbers fail us. Stars which we see glimmering in the heavens because their light is still travelling towards us through immeasurable space, may have been long extinguished. New suns may have come into existence at inexpressible distances from us, which we do not see, because the light from them has not reached our eye. So immense is the universe! — Nay, not the universe, but merely the small part of it which we can discover from our earth; and this small part, according to the suppositions of the most distinguished astronomers, is far from the glorious centre round which the worlds revolve. The earth, the sun,

the myriad stars, float in the great ocean of space, and revolve round a greater sun which, however, remains hidden from our mortal ken. Each hour the globe we inhabit moves fifteen thousand miles, and each day three hundred and fifty-five thousand miles, onward in space. Hourly and daily the sun, with the eleven planets (worlds like our own), and eighteen moons (all of which cannot be seen with the naked eye) belonging to his system, in like manner move along with inconceivable rapidity, without our being able to perceive it. So immeasurable are the distances that separate these worlds belonging to one and the same system, that, even after a century's observation, we are hardly able to discern their motion round another — to us unknown — sun.

And these numberless spheres, almost all of which are of infinitely greater magnitude than the globe we inhabit, are intimately connected with each other, in spite of the enormous distances that separate them. Similar to each other in form, they mutually dispense to each other the light which they irradiate, and which is perhaps the same as that which flashes from the thunder-cloud, and which beams so brightly in the Aurora Borealis.

Ah ! what is the finest masterpiece from the hand of the first human artist, compared with the great, the wonderful, the boundless universe whereon God is enthroned ! And all these worlds form a unity, — are the intimately connected, closely related parts of a continuous whole ! From immeasurable distances the one acts upon the other. The moon moves our seas to ebb and flood, and influences the weather on our globe ; and in like manner our earth is influenced by the sun, which holds in dependence upon itself all

the spheres floating in space at distances of hundreds of millions of miles from it. In virtue of the as yet undiscovered, and probably ever to us undiscoverable, matter that connects the countless worlds, they are constantly influencing each other. Thus all form but one whole; all are connected by the Almighty Hand of Divine Majesty! And thus this world, little as I know of it, is to me as a darkened mirror of eternity. In this boundless ocean of the universe, wherein nothing is ever annihilated, I also dwell. Like all that belongs to it, I can never cease to exist in it. I also am an inhabitant of the Divine edifice, and the All-Holy One, on whose breath hang myriads of suns, I may call Father! My Father! Here, as there, I am within the bounds of eternity! There is no difference, for all is one! The hours, the years which pass over my head on this earth, are parts of eternity, drops in its ocean, in no way separate from it!

When I learn from the observations of distinguished astronomers and natural philosophers, that the size of the sun is more than one million and a half greater than that of our globe; when I learn that the sun probably consists of earths and rocks similar to those of our sphere, that mountains and valleys really appear upon its surface, that it is not, as it seems, a glowing ball of fire, but that it is surrounded by an indescribable luminous vapor in the same manner as our earth is surrounded by clouds; or when I learn, that even tolerably strong telescopes show upon the surface of the moon entire ranges of strangely formed mountains and valleys, interspersed with dark spots, supposed to be oceans and plains; or when I hear that in the sphere which we call our morning and evening star, mountains have been discovered, which far

surpass in altitude those of our earth, — I am seized with reverential awe, and my mind is lost in amazement, at the incomprehensible vastness, at the wonderful construction of the universe, in which I perceive so many globes like our own, and probably — nay, certainly — inhabited like our own by living beings. Beings, the noblest of whom acknowledge and praise God, — ah ! perhaps more truly and worthily than I do.

Then I see the world as in a darkened mirror ; then arise in me feelings never before experienced ; then I become conscious that I belong, not alone to this earth, to this fleeting, insignificant life, but also to other kindred worlds ; that I have brothers, more perfect and more happy, dwelling in immeasurably distant regions of the grand universe. Language fails me. My thoughts are confounded. I seem to have a presentiment of the infinite. I stand in the midst of eternity. I am immersed in its awful depths !

What manifold forms of life and existence may there not be in those great worlds, that roll so majestically through space ! What an ascending scale, of ever greater perfection and happiness, of which I, poor mortal, cannot form even a distant conception ! Even here on earth I behold and admire the manifold differences which prevail in great and small things. Even here I behold strange inequalities. What variety of mental capacity and of power of enjoyment, even among animals ! What an inferior creature is not the mussel clinging to the rock on the sea-shore, when compared to the May-fly rising on golden wings through the balmy air of spring ! What an exalted position does not the sagacious elephant, the intelligent courser, the dog, the faithful friend of

man, maintain at the side of other individual species of the animal race! And what is the instinct of animals compared to the reason of man! And can we suppose that, after calling man into being, the creative power of the Creator was exhausted? Can we suppose that man is the most perfect of created beings in the universe, because he is the highest and most glorious being on this globe? What is this earth of ours? Why, one of the smallest stars in the firmament. And even our sun, though one and a half million times larger than the earth, is but one of the smallest when compared to the suns which, placed at distances from us that no mortal can calculate, yet appear as stars of the first magnitude. If I may be allowed to draw conclusions from the comparative magnitudes of the heavenly bodies, oh, then, man must be one of the meanest and most insignificant of divinely created beings; then there exist in the infinite creation, in the abodes of eternity, beings of far higher nature than ours, before whom we should appear but as the dust at our feet; and whose wisdom, holiness, perfection, happiness, exceeds ours as much as our wisdom, holiness, happiness, exceeds that of the lowly worm which we unconsciously trample under foot.

Yea, there are creatures, of higher nature than myself, far more holy and perfect, who, like myself, pray to the highest of all beings. Revelation mentions them as angels, as the exalted spirits of heaven, as cherubim and seraphim. There are worlds above ours. There are inhabitants of the boundless universe, in comparison with whom I am a mere nothing. And had no revelation taught me so, I should have learnt it from what I observe even on this earth.

Yea, verily, the world is to me a mirror of eternity; and though but a darkened mirror, the images I behold in it are mighty enough to stir up my innermost soul.

Only a darkened mirror, and yet how much do I not behold in it! My knowledge here below is but partial, yet how elevating even in its limited form! When my mind loses itself in the infinitude of divine creations, I feel my insignificance, my nothingness, and yet, at the same time, a sweet pride and consolation come to me in the thought, that I also am worthy of God, the Creator of the universe; that something divine lives and thinks within me!

Alas for me, when from this sublime height, where I seem to have a presentiment of God, I look down upon my past life! Alas for me, what have I been? What have I done? The sorrows I have known, have they been nearer those of the angel, or of the brute? Have I striven more to secure the sublime and intense gratification which the seraph enjoys in the consciousness of his perfection and holiness, or the sensual gratifications of my earthly body, which are common to the lower animals as well?

Blushing, I cast down my eyes before the incorruptible judge within me; before the omniscience of the All-holy One. Fain would I hide myself, — hide the whole course of my life, that no eye might behold it! For I have looked into the darkened mirror of eternity, but failed to be impressed by what I saw. I had an intuitive perception that a higher destiny awaited me, and that I must consecrate myself to it during my earthly life; but I did not raise myself up into the sphere of the angels, but sank down into the slough of animal life. I labored for my body only;

took heed for naught but meat and drink ; stretched out my hands with childlike folly after pomp and earthly glory, evanescent as dust ; I neglected myself, lived not for my soul, my real self, but for my perishable body, which is mine only for a time. I looked into the darkened image of eternity ; but, like the animal whose drooping head allows it only to gaze on the earth, I never lifted my face towards heaven. The applause of men, so contemptible and so little enduring, I prized more highly than the consciousness that I was making myself worthy of God and my eternal destiny. Ah ! how unutterably foolish I have been ! how despicable I seem to myself ! “ Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect ! ” So saidst Thou, my holy, my Divine Teacher, Jesus Christ, who filled the spiritual world with thy light, which was not of this world. Woe is me ! I heard thy voice, O faithful Shepherd of men, but I did not follow its call !

Alas ! like my knowledge, so was also my willing but partial and imperfect. But is it ever to remain so ? Shall I become still more imperfect than I am ? Shall I be precipitated from the place which I now hold in the scale of God-created beings ? Eternity ! Eternity ! In thee dwells Eternal Love ; but woe to me, sinner that I am, in thee dwells also the Eternal Judge whose justice deals with us according to our deserts !

Console me, ye lovely daughters of Heaven, Faith, Hope, and Charity ! Accompany me along the paths which I may still have to traverse. Strengthen me, O Faith in God ! and raise my mind above earthly cares and earthly wishes up to its true destination. Save me when my soul vacillates between time and

eternity, when it is tempted to prefer the animal to the Divine. Save me when passion is nigh mastering me, and when sensuality threatens to carry the victory over principle and duty. And thou, O Hope, divine gift of God, promise held out by the lips of Jesus himself, abandon me not in the most anxious hours of life! And when I sacrifice everything for the sake of righteousness and the purity of my soul, should I be poor and forsaken because of my virtue, and become a laughing-stock to men, — O then, Hope in Eternity and Mercy, do not thou forsake me!

And thou, loveliest of all virtues, parent and source of every spiritual perfection, Charity, love to God, and love to man, penetrate me so that in thee I may live and breathe and have my being. Only he who dwells in love, dwells in God; only to him who dwells in love, who is thoroughly imbued with love, is eternity opened here on earth; only he enjoys here below already a foretaste of its bliss. For He who dwelleth and ruleth in eternity is the all-animating Love, is God!

THE EXISTENCE OF ANGELS.

Alone by reason's glimmering light
We dimly search out Nature's plan,
But all to *Thee* was clear and bright
Long ere creation's dawn began;
Together linked, some scattered beams
Of truth our weary toil may claim,
But to *thine* eyes, these fitful gleams
Glow like a golden sea of flame.

The countless hosts that throng each sphere,
Each blooming flower, each hidden gem,
Revealed before thy glance appear,
And by their names Thou callest them.
Thou piercest to the germ within,
Doubts, dangers, ne'er can 'scape thine eye;
Thou knowest all that is, has been,
And *can* be in futurity.

Such glorious knowledge is in Thee,
I tremble at the wondrous height:
The wondrous depth o'erpowers me,
As I stand praying in thy sight.
I faint, I falter, God! Thy ways
Are measureless; unless *Thou* teach,
Not even the archangels' gaze
Can sound their depth, their height can reach.

(MATT. xviii. 10.)

AT a very early period the human race already showed a tendency to believe in the existence of higher beings, who, though created by God, were infinitely superior to man. This belief was very natural. Because, the better acquainted men became with the various parts of creation, the more convinced they were that in nature there are no gaps; that every-

thing embraced in it forms one great continuous chain, in which the lowest link, *i. e.*, the most imperfect being, is connected with the highest, though only through innumerable other links, gradually rising in the scale of perfection; that between the broken fragment of lifeless rock and man lies the long progressive series of plants and animals; that the lifeless stone first touches in its crystalline form the lowest family of plants; that certain plants, on the other hand, approach very near to animal life, such as it is seen in the water polypus and the coral; that in the endless scale of living beings the less perfect is always followed by the more perfect, until at length the most perfect animal touches the least perfect, most animal-like race of human beings, who are only raised above the sagacity of the dog, the elephant, or the ape, in as far as a faint spark of reason glimmers within them.

On observing this remarkable and regular gradation of beings, the question would naturally arise in man, Though I may be able to discern all that lies below me, does it follow that there is naught above me but what I know? The most sagacious among animals are indeed aware of my existence, but can they form to themselves even a distant conception of what it is to be a man, or of what man can acquire and perform through means of his mental capacities? And can I venture to presume that the most perfect man touches immediately in the scale of beings the Deity who rules the universe?

Impossible! the deeper I look into God's creation, the more his glory and his boundless power are made manifest to me, the more vividly do I feel how infinitely inferior I am to the All-High, how far I am

removed from Him. And can I suppose that the immense interval that separates man from the Power that rules the universe is left unoccupied ; that the continuity of nature, which I observe wherever my mind can penetrate, has here been suddenly interrupted ; that between God and man there is naught but an infinite desert ? This is inconceivable !

In like manner as in the planetary system smaller moons revolve round the earth ; in like manner as our planet and other planets revolve round the sun with other moons ; in like manner as the sun, accompanied by all the planets and their moons, and probably together with many other suns which we call fixed stars, moves in space around an infinitely greater sun which our eyes have never beheld ; in like manner as this again, with all the surrounding suns, planets, and moons, sweeps around a still more glorious centre, in periods of time for which human language has no numbers ;—so, also, there must be placed between human nature and the Deity myriads of higher beings, super-mundane natures, nearer akin to God than poor mortal man ! In ordinary language we comprise all these beings under the name of angels, but we know not wherein consists their higher nature, nor do we know the number of grades which there may be between the least perfect angel who is nearest akin to the most perfect man, and the most glorious of created beings, who enjoy unutterable bliss, feeling themselves in close proximity to God.

The Holy Scriptures also speak of the existence of these lovely natures, without affording any idea of what they are and wherein their advantages consist. The Scriptures only mention their superior happiness, and say that they are the servants of the Most High,

the doers of his bidding. Jesus Christ, also, who withdrew the curtain from as much of the sanctuary of the super-terrestrial world as He thought the eyes of mortals could bear to behold, — Jesus, also, speaks of the higher spirits which intervene between us and the Most High. But He only speaks of them as beings standing nearer the throne of the Eternal Father than we, and taking a loving interest in the welfare of human spirits, in like manner as kind-hearted mortals often constitute themselves friends and protectors of beings inferior to themselves. (Matt. xviii. 10.)

Now, although it would be vain labor to endeavor to form a conception of the nature and happiness of the higher spirits, it is nevertheless an interesting occupation for our thoughts to dwell upon what we know of the spiritual in this earthly existence, and to draw thence conclusions as to the spirits that rank above us. For in the world that we know, we find as great variety in the spiritual forces or invisible powers as in the material things. Among such spiritual forces or essences, the existence of which we know only through their effects, we must indeed count not only human spirits and animal souls, but also those powers which we usually denominate blind forces of nature, and which dwell in all things, not only in the animal and in the plant, but in stone, in water, in fire, and in all elementary substances.

Is not heat a special power, which expands and changes everything that is brought within its influence? Is not light a special power, which, while stimulating our eyes, speeds on in all directions in straight lines and with inconceivable rapidity? Who has not beheld with wonder the mysterious power of the loadstone, which it communicates to iron? It works ac-

according to eternal laws peculiar to itself. The magnet attracts toward itself light iron materials from a certain distance ; and the iron needle rubbed with loadstone ever points one of its extremities, and always the same one, towards the northern quarter of the globe. In consequence hereof it becomes the trusty and unerring guide of the sea-farer during the storms that drive him out of his track on the ocean, and also of the miner, who labors deep down in the bowels of the earth, far from the light of day.

Is not that strange something which manifests itself as lightning in the clouds of air, and as a spark emitted by the coat of various animals when stroked, — which betrays its existence in certain fishes of the sea by a violent shock, and which men of science call forth by friction from various substances in the form of a flash of lightning, or of a tremendous shock, — is not this a peculiar power ?

All these and many other forces of nature are, in a manner, spiritual, — that is to say, they are present in the various bodies, though imperceptible to our senses, until called forth by certain circumstances. Then they reveal themselves by some change produced in the bodies, and our senses take cognizance of their presence. In like manner the spiritual power of man remains hidden, until revealed in word and action.

These blind forces of nature are diffused through all matter. They work for, against, and with each other. They fill the air and every field of space. Through them only we obtain cognizance of the existence of the stars. They are in consequence spread through the boundless ocean of all creation ; lifeless, that is, imperceptible in themselves, and only active and vivid

when brought into connection with certain bodies, just as the spirit of man only manifests its existence when united with a body.

We call the effects produced by these hidden forces natural phenomena. We, as well as every animal, every stone, every plant, are imbued with this spiritual something, without knowing what it is in itself, and how it works. It remains ever hidden beneath the play of its phenomena, in like manner as the spirit of man is unknown to itself, but only learns from its effects on the body, or its action through the body, that it is present.

Finally, all that we know about these blind forces of nature is, that their influence contributes greatly to maintain the life of plants, and also the mere vegetable life of animals and men. It is they who give heat and color to our blood, and who suffuse the flowers with varied tints. It is they who in the dark caverns of the earth form various metals and minerals, and transform the latter into regular crystals.

Nevertheless all these forces together are incapable of producing a single blade of grass, with its fibres, its cells, its air-valves and spiral tubes. The blade of grass only comes into existence through means of a seed of its species. In this seed alone lies the possibility of the future plant with all its forms, as, for instance, in the acorn is the germ of the future majestic oak.

But what is it that develops itself so beautifully and wonderfully in and with this germ? What is it that forms out of the volatile substances borrowed from earth, water, and air, marvelously regular tubes, valves, veins, fruits, down, leaves, roots, all organized with perfect wisdom? What is it that produces, in

human and animal bodies, bone, blood, sinews, and nerves; that regulates the internal parts, makes the blood flow according to laws of its own, and establishes the relative position of each part to the whole? The human spirit dwells in the body without knowing what is passing within it, or how it is that everything moves within it according to rational laws.

Here there is evidently something more than the mere blind natural forces, such as magnetism, light, and heat. Here is a higher power, which, though still not self-conscious, and still following blindly the laws of the Creator, yet already builds up instruments for definite purposes. I call this more exalted and powerful something, the vital force.

This vital force — which develops the bodies of men, animals, and plants, which builds and sustains according to eternal laws laid down by the Creator — is totally different from the simple blind powers of nature. A flint-rock will never become a rose-bush, the seed-pods of a fruit-tree will never grow into gold. Each remains after its kind what it is, and the vital power develops itself according to the laws of creation. In like manner as it draws towards itself, and transmutes earthly materials for the construction of the bodies of plants, animals, and men; so also it uses, as it were, for the completion of its purpose, all the ethereal or spiritual substances, *i. e.* the simple powers of nature alluded to above. It uses these, however, only as means, and thus proves that it is a higher power than they.

The connection between the vital power and the natural forces is, however, so intimate, that the former, failing the aid of the latter, remains inactive. If heat and light be not admitted, the vital force in the

vegetable germ cannot develop its activity, cannot make use of its instruments above and beneath the earth, to gather up new materials.

Thus we recognize in the realm of creation known to us two kinds of spiritual essences: the blind powers of nature, and the true life-power in plants and animals. But the power which calls forth life, or rather, which in itself constitutes that which in plants and animals we call *life*, is as little self-conscious as is the force called heat. What does the growing hair on our heads, what does our body with all its limbs, know about itself, except through the activity of the indwelling soul?

The plant has life, so has the animal; but the latter has also a soul, that is to say, possesses an innate power of perception, and of judgment to a certain extent, and likewise a power of feeling hatred and affection, anger and joy, desire and repugnance. Animals have also the power of willing; but plants, which do indeed, in rare instances, manifest a faint indication of sensation, do not show the most distant appearance of a will.

Therefore the animal kingdom ranks as far above the world of plants as the self-determining soul ranks above the mechanical vital power, or as life ranks above the blind powers of nature.

Yet the animal soul is intimately connected with the vital principle in plants, and the activity of both often manifests itself in a similar manner. Just as the plant, following laws of which it is not conscious, draws from earth, air, and water the nourishment it requires, so does the animal soul act in obedience to mysterious instincts, which it has not the power to resist. These instincts, however, originate in the pe-

culiar construction of the animal body. Thus horned cattle pass by those herbs which are not congenial to the nature of their bodies, and seek for those which will afford them healthy nourishment. Thus hunger makes the wolf ferocious, while the instinct that incites them to pair makes even the fiercest beasts gregarious. All the sensations and desires of animals arise out of their bodily structure, their acts are influenced by this alone ; that which is agreeable or painful to their bodies, they like or dislike.

How different from the mere animal soul does the exalted spirit of man appear ! This is not only conscious of its own existence, but clearly so. It not only takes cognizance of the things that surround it (the animal soul does as much), but it recognizes the more subtle relations between them, with their causes and consequences. It investigates the wonders of the lower creation, it masters the elements through its powers of invention, and presses them into its service ; it transplants the produce of the vegetable kingdom into foreign soils ; it conquers the strength of the most powerful animals ; it calculates the movements of the heavenly spheres through space, and bears within itself a revelation of the Deity.

Of all this the animal knows nothing. The soul of the most sagacious brute is incapable of rising to the height attained by the thoughts even of a young child. The animal soul has indeed a will, but it only wills what its body desires, and acts only in accordance with the bodily instincts. The spirit of man, on the contrary, when its innate nobility is uncorrupted, acknowledges a higher law than that of bodily instincts ; it obeys, not the flesh in which it dwells, but itself alone, that is to say, the laws of its reason,

whereby it distinguishes between good and evil, right and wrong. He who obeys only self-imposed laws is free. Therefore the human spirit is capable of freedom, and the animal soul, being the slave of sensual instincts, is in consequence essentially different from it. The human spirit is akin to the divine, the animal soul is akin to the flesh.

But the spirit of man is nevertheless, through the earthly bonds in which it is held, closely connected with the animal soul. Frequently the spirit is hardly master of itself; the animal soul connected with its body overwhelms its more exalted power, and thus arises a twofold law in the human breast. Man does not always do that which the spirit wills, but, on the contrary, often does that which it abhors. Therefore St. Paul, the inspired Apostle, said:—

“But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.” (Rom. vii. 23.)

Further, the human spirit, in spite of its consciousness of immortality, is also herein similar to the animal soul, that, although it takes cognizance of the things that surround it, it has no knowledge of its own nature. It is familiar with all things, but is a stranger to itself, and cannot say how or wherefore it exists. All earthly matters it surveys and organizes with wonderful acuteness, but the spiritual world it cannot fathom, though it is itself spirit.

Does the chain of the higher forces and essences end with the spirit of man? Oh, if so, how short were it not! Who can believe, when everything in the universe bears the stamp of infinitude, that the circle of the higher powers should consist only of the

blind forces of nature, the vital power, the animal soul, and the spirit of man?

Nay, feeling the inconceivably great distance that separates my spirit from the Deity, I am willing to believe in the existence of manifold powers and forces of a higher nature, — spirits more full of knowledge, goodness, and power, than ours, or Angels, as we term them in ordinary language.

These higher powers are, perhaps, or even probably, as closely akin to the human spirit as this is to the animal soul, or as the latter is to the vital force in matter, or as this again is to the dead forces in nature; at all events, there can be no doubt that these spirits, kindred to our own, are as far above us in power and capacity as man is above the animals, as animals are above plants, and plants above minerals.

It seems almost as if I could picture to myself the clearer insight of those higher spiritual existences, which rank next to ourselves in the scale of beings. They must be able to look deeper into the mysteries of God. While we mortals are endowed with the capacity of understanding and representing earthly matters, but are left in ignorance as to the nature of spirit, and as to the more occult powers of the universe, — the higher spirits are probably acquainted, and even familiar, with the laws of spirit. Before their eyes the mysteries of the elementary bodies lie open, as the cup of a flower, with its coronal and its stamens, lies open before ours. We see only the outlines, forms, and relations of things as they appear outwardly; the more lofty spirits, in virtue of their higher faculties, of which we cannot even form a conception, see and understand the internal nature and structure of things.

But hold! Whither do my thoughts venture in their bold flight? They are endeavoring to break through the limits of their legitimate field of activity, and sacrilegiously to force themselves into the sanctuary of higher powers and spirits. Retreat! Await the hour which thy Creator has appointed, when the all-animating Spirit, the Father of the universe, shall call thee, and perhaps place thee, also, in the rank of the more highly endowed beings.

O Lord! Can this be? Shall I be worthy of it? Have my spiritual powers been sufficiently developed? Has my spirit ceased to obey earthly desires, to follow the animal instincts of the body? has it ceased to give itself up to voluptuousness, covetousness, anger, love of revenge, hatred, and malice? Is my spirit free, acting only in accordance with its own laws, *i. e.* God's laws? Does it live for duty more than for worldly gain? Is it actuated at all times by love, and not by enmity?

O Father! O Lord God! How my spirit yearns towards Thee! How it longs to escape from the imperfect and to reach the perfect! Could I gain the victory, how willingly would I die!

Die! What is death to the spirit? It is but parting from its earthly coil, the body, and from its earthly sister, the soul. Even the latter escapes from its worn-out instrument, the body, and withdraws from it its vegetable life.

Death never proceeds from the spirit to the body, for the spirit is life. Death arises from violent disturbance of the spirit's vehicle, the body; or in consequence of the natural forces having completed their circulation in the organism, according to divine rule. They then withdraw from the body, which thus loses

light and heat, motion and stimulant; and the natural forces being, as it were, the nourishing oil of the flame of life, this becomes extinct, — the human spirit is released, — is mature !

O God ! may it be my right, in the solemn hour of my dissolution, to proclaim in exultant tones of joy : I am a power ripened for a better state ! Admit me among you, O beings of higher nature, brothers standing on a more exalted level in the scale of creation ! I am your brother, for I am immortal !

DEATH IS MY GAIN.

Rock of God! mine arm doth clasp thee:
Immortality! I grasp thee:
Night and sorrow may surround me,
Grief and care my peace invade;
Shall I faint because they wound me?
No, I seek thy cooling shade;
Longing after God's own rest
Fills my soul, and makes me blest.

As I reach that mountain height
Swells my soul with calm delight,
When the cool air, softly kissing,
Wakes a fresher spring within
(Feeble image of God's blessing
After long repented sin),
Then I feel my course is gained,
Soon my goal shall be attained.

Then, oh then, what tongue can tell
The rapture of my bosom's swell,
When no sorrow more can grieve me!
When God's mantle wraps me round,
Never more alone to leave me,
Every chain of sin unbound,
All my soul is happiness,
Freedom all my being's bliss

(1 COR. xv. 31.)

THE human body with which we are invested on earth is but the transparent veil of the soul, and we should ever hold in mind this relation between soul and body, for this conception is not only true in itself, but is fruitful of important conclusions bearing upon life.

The Deity willed that the spirit of man should be

capable of placing itself in communication with the non-spiritual existences, therefore it was enveloped in a refined earthly material, every part of which is vivified by the spirit. Through means of a tissue of nerves, so delicate as scarcely to be perceptible to the naked eye, and which interpenetrate the entire body, the soul holds command over the latter. Through the body the soul receives impressions from without, which tend to its improvement, and it gradually learns to avail itself of the body as an instrument of action upon the outward world. If the bodily veil be rent in twain, if the instrument be destroyed, the spirit loses its power over its former habitation, which becomes as foreign to it as all other earthly matter. This estrangement between soul and body is called death.

The body is a transparent covering of the soul. In all movements and changes, in repose as in action, we recognize the soul behind the appearances of the body. It is not the body that loves or is angered; it is the soul that speaks in thundering accents through the instrumentality of the voice, and which smiles in the merry glance of the eye; it is the shame felt by the soul that suffuses the cheek with blushes; it is the soul's courage, terror, longing, or suffering that is shown in the various expressions of its outward covering. For when the soul is separated from the delicate and mobile covering, which we call body, what becomes of the latter? It sinks down and lies like a discarded garment. It grows rigid like a marble statue, and we can hardly believe that these dead ashes have ever been animated by a higher essence.

It is not the body that we either love or hate in others, but the soul which is concealed behind its veil.

It is the soul's loveliness that charms us; its wisdom or its virtue which inspires us with respect; its degeneracy that awakens our indignation. In the presence of the soul-abandoned corpse, all love and hatred cease, for our friend or our foe has disappeared, and his discarded covering makes no more impression on us than any other dead matter.

Natural as it is that no one should love the body of another, but, on the contrary, the soul that beams forth from it, as natural is it that each man should love the body in which his own soul is clothed. He seeks to protect and improve it, because the soul requires a worthy and efficient instrument; he endeavours to adorn and beautify it, because the innate and constant yearning of the soul for perfection and distinction involuntarily passes over to that which is most intimately connected with it. The soul even strives, in the feeling of its own unworthiness, to cover its own failings by the beauty of its earthly veil; it tries to draw the folds of this more closely around itself, in order that it may not be seen in its ugliness, — and of such persons we say that they present a false appearance.

The necessity that each soul should be clad in a veil of flesh is one of the eternal ordinances of the Deity. Hence the deep and strong love of the soul for its body; hence that clinging to life which it is almost impossible to overcome.

But what is death? Nothing but the separation of the soul from its earthly covering. What becomes of the covering when discarded? Does it vanish from God's creation? No, it moulders into dust and ashes, and mingles with the rest of the earth, out of whose nourishing elements it was originally built up.

It does not go out of creation, but remains in it available for other purposes. But what becomes of the unveiled soul? Does that vanish from God's creation? Oh no! How could it be possible that the nobler element should cease to exist, when the baser one is imperishable? Are we to believe that it has been removed from the infinitude of created beings because it has thrown off the veil through which alone it could reveal its presence to our senses? Nay, it lives! For even the dust in which it once enveloped itself is still in existence. It lives! For God is Creator, not annihilator! It lives! For the All-wise cannot have repented of the exalted purpose for which He called it into being.

And is the throwing off of this earthly veil so very painful? It is true the natural love of life which the Creator has implanted in us makes us recoil from the thought of parting from our earthly covering; but the strength of the human spirit can conquer the terrors of nature. How many noble men have not met death in the cause of God, fatherland, faith, or friends! *They* felt no fear of death. How many poor, weak, degenerate beings have not, driven by despair, voluntarily sacrificed a life that had become a burden to them!

The dying do not practice hypocrisy, and therefore from their features we may judge what is passing in their minds. This being the case, it would almost appear that a pleasurable feeling must be experienced when the spirit is leaving its mortal coil; for it has been frequently observed that the features of persons who are dying from painful diseases at the last moment assume an expression of cheerful repose, and that even around the lips of the corpse a placid smile,

left by the spirit in parting, lingers, and seems to say, "Ah, what blessed relief!"

But the imagination of those persons who attach too much importance to the body, and who therefore shudder at the idea that it is to be delivered up to destruction in the earth, makes death more terrible than it is in reality. Giving way to self-delusion, they even at times seem to fancy that the dead dust feels painfully its state in the earth, whereas in fact that which feels has hastened into a higher existence, and the corpse, the discarded veil of the spirit, is nothing more than insensible clay.

Parting from the habitual and pleasant relations of life, the loss of well-known pleasures, and separation from beloved friends on earth, may indeed be painful. But in these cases it is not death itself, but that which we leave behind us that causes us to mourn. It is our undue attachment to the earthly goods which have only been lent to us, and were never intended to be our lasting possessions, that occasions the grief which we experience. It is, therefore, an imperfection of the soul, a want of true wisdom, which entails suffering, as does every fault. Yea, even the love we bear our friends may be reprehensible. Can we expect that the Deity will take our obstinate attachments into consideration, and alter his higher purposes to suit our views? And in what does the parting from our beloved in death differ from every other parting, even from the "good-night" we wish our friends before we go to sleep?

Death may indeed be fearful to those who have entirely, or in great measure, neglected their immortal soul in this life, who — like the animals thoughtless of the future beyond the grave — have

only taken heed for the well-being and enjoyment of their bodies; who have oppressed their fellow-men, or slandered and deceived them, in order to gain for themselves more honors, more riches, and more enjoyment; to whom it seems preposterous to restrain their sensual desires, their animal instincts, in order to strengthen the power of their souls; who call it folly to sacrifice earthly pleasure for the sake of virtue; who consider it silly enthusiasm to work for the good of others when no thanks are to be reaped, or when persecution and great sacrifices must be encountered.

When the moment has come for such persons to throw off the earthly coil, the body they so much love, for which alone they think God has created them; when they are to part from the dust, for which alone they lived, to which they sacrificed all things, for which they committed so much injustice, — to them indeed death must be terrible. For poor, unworthy, miserable, imperfect are their neglected souls, which have lost the sweet innocence of which they could boast in childhood, and which are now loaded with the burden of many sins. As they sowed in life, so they have reaped. For the eternal future of their spirits they never sowed.

Even when in the full enjoyment of health the unrighteous man cannot at times help blushing at his own depravity. In the midst of his evil-doing he is obliged to confess to himself that he is acting in a manner which he cannot justify either to God or to man. But his soul, though feeling what is right, is conquered by the power of his sensual being, to which long habit has given the mastery. But when the power of the senses declines with the strength of the body, when self-delusion is no longer possible, and

the soul recognizes itself in all its hideousness,—then what must be his state? With what feelings must *he* look to the future, who has lost *all* upon earth, and who has nothing to hope from eternity?

How different the condition of the wise and noble spirit, which knows its duties and fulfills them, and honors the high purpose for which the omnipotence of God called it into existence. How different the condition of the Christian, who has gained full ascendancy over his lower nature, and ever places the claims of the soul above those of the body; who understands the deep import of the words, to live in Christ.

To him death is a gain. How could it be a loss to him? To him who has made the divine thoughts of Christ his own, neither this earth, nor his own house, nor village, nor city, is his true home. He is conscious that he was not born to be forever attached to the clod of earth which he cultivates to satisfy his earthly necessities, but to be a citizen of the eternal and infinite realm of God. In his eyes it is not this short life on earth that is the most important, but the life in the entire divine creation. The universe is his Father's house, and God, who dwells therein, is his Father, and every soul in it is bound to him by the ties of brotherhood.

To him death is a gain. For what loss does the soul sustain in death? It only throws off its heavy earthly veil; it only changes its garment; it receives from the Father of love a more beautiful raiment, instead of the cast-off vestment, which its altered circumstances have rendered useless. The soul remains what it was, God remains with it, the divine universe, with all the wonders of creation, remain. What does

it lose? The friends and relatives whom it loved on earth? Oh no, they are still in the house of the Father, they are still bound to it by the same ties of brotherhood as before, though they cannot communicate with it any longer through earthly means. Nay, its loved ones are not lost to it. That cannot be lost which is in the hands of God.

To him who knows how to live with Jesus, death is a gain. Or can it be said that this sublunary life is full of roses, and has no thorns? It is true that with the change I lose many pleasures, but then, also, I shall be placed above many fears and many sorrows. Tears will never be shed by me again, for sweet is the fate of liberated souls! Is this earthly life so full of unmixed happiness that we should wish it to endure forever? Why do persons of very advanced age so frequently long for rest, for dissolution, for liberation, for removal into the better life? and why, among thousands and thousands of people, is there not one who, if the choice were given, would begin life over again if its course were to be exactly the same? Well, then, what great loss can this life be in reality, when there are so few to whom it has through its whole course brought sufficient happiness to induce them to wish it to remain forever as it was? Is it not rather a gain for souls, who can with confidence resign themselves to it, to go over into another and a better world? After all, what are the terrors of death? Merely the terrors of a childishly timid imagination. The same God, O soul, that divests thee of one garment, will invest thee with another.

He who knows how to live with Christ, will also know how to die joyfully with Him. (1 Cor: xv. 31.) He dies each time he lifts his thoughts to God and

forgets all earthly matters. He dies each time he communes in spirit with his departed loved ones, and feels that he is with them. For in such solemn moments this world is to him as if it were not. He is in the presence of God, in the presence of those he loved. He is what his soul will be when it has been uncoiled from its earthly veil ; only not in such great perfection as it will be when it shall be able to communicate with God and the loved friends, in a new vestment, and as it were through means of more glorious instruments.

Death is my gain ; for what is the purpose of my life on earth ? Like all mankind, I am destined to live eternally ; all nature teaches me this ; and therefore, even here below, I am to live for eternity ; and all my longing is for a better, higher existence. It is with this in view that I labor to improve myself ; it is with this in view that I endeavor to adorn my spirit with every virtue. That which I become through Christ, that is, through following his divine example, that shall I be on yonder side the grave. It is therefore death that leads me to the desired goal. Through it I reach what I have been ever striving for ; through it I become what I was destined to be.

Death is my gain. I exchange a less perfect garment for a more perfect one, exchange a lower seat, in the great paternal house of the universe, for a higher one ; I exchange an inferior degree of happiness for a state of bliss, of which my limited earthly faculties can as little form a conception as the lowly worm in the dust can form a conception of the joys that may vibrate in the bosom of rational man. I proceed from a necessitous state into a world of overflowing plenty, where a drop becomes an ocean, and a spark of light becomes a sun.

Death is my gain. Why should my soul be alarmed at the unknown road along which it has to travel? Is the path that I have to wander here below better known to me? Is not each succeeding hour of my life shrouded to me in impenetrable darkness? Do I know what will happen to me the next moment? Whither I shall go? And yet I live through each of those hours, and each becomes light to me as soon as I live in it.

And equally light will be the hour that succeeds that of death. The unknown road will be made known to me as soon as I enter upon it. Why, then, should I recoil from it with a shudder? Is it not the same as has been trodden by the dear ones who have gone before me? Why should I not be rejoiced to follow in the path of those souls who will ever be precious to me? Perhaps, in the very moment when the earthly veil falls from my spirit, I shall recognize those dear ones, whom I believed so far removed from me, and shall learn that they were always nearer to me than in my earthly state I had any conception of.

Yea, verily, death is my gain! It is closer union with the Father of spirits; it is reunion with my glorified loved ones, for whom my soul is yearning; reunion with those for whom to this day my wounded heart bleeds, my eyes weep. Reunion! Renewed possession! Renewed life! O ye whom God's hand directed towards me, and linked to me in his creation! To find you again! To love you again! To be forever united with beloved and glorified souls! What bliss in this thought! God gave you to me: God, the most exalted love, inspired us with this love, which death cannot destroy, and which binds the mortal, as with invisible bonds, to the inhabitants of

the higher world ! God does not destroy that which is holy, which is good, for it is his own work ! And love is the highest good which souls can acquire in their mutual intercourse. It is because He is himself Infinite Love, that God has peopled the universe with living souls.

Death is my gain ! May this be my last sigh on my bed of death ; and may the thought of the love of my Creator, and of the dear ones that have preceded me into another life, be the last that occupies my soul ere the veil falls from it. When it drops, my spirit shall at once be in those realms of glory which they entered before me.

Therefore, O Christ, O divine Revealer of the Father, be Thou my life ; for without Thee to die were to see my soul enter into destruction ! O God-enlightened Teacher, I will think thy thoughts, I will walk according to thy divine doctrines. I will contemplate from thy elevation all earthly matters. With thy love I will love my brethren, with thy zeal endeavor to spread joy and happiness around me. With thy courage I will overcome every obstacle to virtue, and will master myself so as to be able to act justly, nobly, divinely. With thy patience I will bear every ill of life, with thy wisdom and moderation enjoy its pleasures. With thy faith I will walk meekly and trustingly in the ways of Providence, and through thine eyes I will look up to eternity as to my Father's house, and to God as to my Father.

For if Christ be my life, death is my gain.

ETERNAL DESTINY.

PART I.

Star of day
Whose laughing ray
Is to cheer our homesteads given, —
Stars of night
Shining bright,
In the deep blue vault of heaven, —
Though ye shine
With peace divine,
Making lovely earth and sea,
Comes the feeling
O'er me stealing
Still how dark man's life may be.
Sadly turning
From the burning
Of your golden glances bright,
Thus I raise
My trembling gaze
To the everlasting light,
Which o'er cradle and o'er grave,
O'er the vale where palm-trees wave,
O'er the bloody battle strife,
O'er the joys and tears of life, —
Whether fortune smile or frown,
Still unchangeably looks down.

(ROM. xi. 33, 34.)

THE months pass calmly over our heads heedless of our hopes and our sorrows. The seasons vary in unbroken succession. Old things become new, and new ones old ; the works of the past perish, in their turn to be forgotten. It is ever the same. Everything has its invariable course assigned to it, its inevitable goal marked out for it. Everything is

subject to one great iron rule, — the stars of heaven as well as the flowers of the field ; the rock as well as the worm that crawls at its foot ; the entire nation as well as the single individuals born into it. Nothing can be otherwise than it is ; nothing will ever be otherwise than it is appointed to be. Such is destiny, — the eternal !

What is destiny ? — How ? Everything has been preordained from eternity. No blossom fades, no infant weeps, no rock is precipitated from a mountain, no nation perishes, unless it has been so ordained from the beginning of time. What, then, of my virtue and my sins ? Who is the criminal, who the judge ? Is my will also preordained by destiny ? Am I nothing more nor less in the great universe than the mote dancing in the sunbeam, not as it wills but as it must ? If everything that happens now has been preordained since the beginning of time, of what avail are my sighs, my wishes, my striving for perfection ? Of what avail are my prayers ? Were not these prayers also preordained in the eternal councils of destiny ? I am, then, but a machine, forming part of the great all ; and my supposed free-will is but a delusion.

What is eternal destiny ? It is the immense, infinite, immovable universe, in which all things follow each other necessarily as cause and effect. Each effect becomes in its turn the cause of new effects. The tree brings forth seed, and the seed brings forth a tree. My youth having been what it was, I must be what I am. The preordained occurrences of last year have produced those of this year ; and had it not been for those of long-forgotten centuries, we should not have witnessed the events of our times. Thus

has one thing been linked within another from the beginning of time, and this concatenation extends into the infinite future. There, as in the past, one wheel of the huge world-engine drives the other, one part is indissolubly linked to another. Such is the rule of destiny, and therefore naught can be changed. Just as he who throws a stone into the still waters of the lake knows beforehand the sound that will ensue, and the eddies which will be formed, and which, spreading in ever wider circles, will extend to the distant shores, while in the centre, whence the movement first issued, the waters have already become still again; so might one, acquainted with the nature of all things in the world, know by anticipation, from the movement given to them in the first instance, thousands of years previously, what would be the events and occurrences during thousands of succeeding years. But that would be omniscience, and omniscience is not given to mortal man. Therefore he totters with uncertain step through the great labyrinth of the universe, knowing not what went before or what is to come after; calling what befalls him sometimes fortune, sometimes chance, sometimes unavoidable necessity. But the terms chance and accident are merely terms applied to those things the immediate cause of which man is unable to detect. There can be no such thing as chance, as every effect has its cause. Everything is under the rule of necessity; everything has been included in the councils of eternal destiny.

Everything? How? Is then the infinite universe, with everything that stirs and moves within it, nothing but a machine, a well-constructed clock-work, in which nothing can take place but what the constructor has foreseen and prearranged? I myself am, then,

but a very insignificant part of this world's machine? I am struck with dismay. What am I? Where am I? How alone I stand with my joys and my sorrows in the midst of this cold, rigid organization of the world, amid these dead, will-less beings! Why am I destined to feel and love, when there is nothing that deserves my love? Why hate, when all evil, even vice, is preordained, and follows a law of necessity? Alas, my dearest wishes, my sweetest hopes, abandon me! For what purpose is this juggle carried on? Why should I be made to feel repentance for faults which I was preordained to commit? Why should I hate sin, if eternal destiny has consecrated me to that also?

No, no! It cannot be so! Every feeling within me contradicts this conception of the universe and its laws. My spirit revolts against it. I am distinctly conscious of the freedom of my will; and though my body may be similar to a passive instrument, my spirit is not a machine, it is living; it rules and determines after mature reflection. Nay, the world is not a cold, dead mass, in which everything moves without consciousness, according to eternally preordained laws. The action, the power, and the goodness of a living and loving God animate all things, and spread happiness around. Oh, what would the world be without love, without a Deity, without justice, freedom, and retribution? A gigantic corpse, from which the soul has fled; an unconscious play of things, in which there is no place for the highest and the best, for virtue, love, perfection, but only for their names. A miserable, unmeaning, unsolvable, never-ending riddle; and the most wretched of beings in it, man,

with the claims of his reason and the sentiments of his heart !

No ; such a conception of destiny is an error of the understanding, arising from a one-sided view of things, which entangles it in self-contradiction, and sets it at variance with everything that we perceive in the outer world, as well as with our inward consciousness.

What is eternal destiny ? It is the immense, fixed, endless organization of the world, in which all things follow each other necessarily as cause and effect. Each effect becomes in its turn a cause ; therefore that which takes place to-day is the necessary consequence of the past, and that which I am to-day is the necessary fruit of what I was in days gone by. I cannot deny this ; how, then, shall I avoid those errors of the understanding in which I am again in danger of being involved ?

I will take a survey of the various aspects of the universe. When I do this, I perceive in the dead stone, and through all created things up to the highest creature, an infinite number of forces. Everything that is, is in itself a force or agency, — that is to say, it acts upon the surrounding matter. Even the dead stone is a force or agency, otherwise it could not act upon the things around it, through its weight and its cohesion ; otherwise it could not act upon our senses, through its color, its form, or its smell. That which produces no effect upon me is to me non-existent, but that which acts upon me is a force.

The forces present in God's universe are as manifold as they are countless. They form an immense, graduated scale, from the most insignificant entity to the highest. They unite with other forces, and through such union produce new phenomena. What

a variety of forces are there not, for instance, in the body which we call a stone! How much greater still is the number and variety in plants; and beyond these again in animals! But there is not only variety in these forces, but also gradations. The vital force of the plant is a higher agency than any that resides in the stone. The plant multiplies itself, has its youth and maturity, and propagates its species. Higher still is the force which we call animal soul; because this latter feels, chooses, judges. Higher still is the force of the human spirit in the beautiful distinctness of its self-consciousness. And forces higher even than this range above us, and are called in the Scriptures angels and archangels.

But all these families and kingdoms of forces in God's creation are what they are by the WILL OF GOD; each has its special sphere of action, its special conditions, its special laws assigned to it, and according to these it must exist and act. Therefore the stone is, and ever remains, a stone, and retains its qualities as such; therefore the roots of the vine and of the thistle seek only such nourishing substances as are in conformity with their nature; therefore the birds of the air live and move otherwise than the fishes in the sea. Every force in nature has received from God its peculiar law, and thus the human spirit has also its own law, which is neither that of the animal, the plant, nor the stone.

In conformity with these special laws of their nature is the action of all created things upon each other. They unite and separate, attract and repel each other, seek and avoid each other, and thus arise the teeming life and ceaseless movement in the uni-

verse. The mutual conflict between the various forces constitutes the life of the universe.

As none of the forces which in their totality constitute the universe can act otherwise than the sphere of action assigned to them and the laws laid down for them by God will admit of, their action is the necessary consequence of these laws. And when the forces came into being, the will of God, the great and eternal Constructor of the worlds, foresaw all the effects they were to produce. This was the *eternal preordination* of that which was to be.

But when God from the beginning willed the existence of the world, He willed it in his infinite wisdom. Therefore the conflict of the forces created no confusion, but progressive development; not internecine destruction, but a great and wonderful life, comprising all and in which each serves the other. Such was, such is, and such will ever be, the great order of the universe, in which stars and grains of dust move in their appointed circles, in which the humblest grasses and mosses bloom and die away as do entire nations.

And when God in his infinite wisdom created the order of the universe, and created it for infinitely exalted ends, He created it also in the fullness of his love. He, the All-Good One, willed that the whole should be infinitely harmonious, and that all the sentient forces in it should enjoy happiness. Therefore we see provision made even for the happiness of the humblest insect; and for the spirit of man He provided far higher bliss. But the insect is bereft of its joy, and feels pain, as soon as it violates the laws of its nature; and in like manner the spirit of man forfeits the higher joys provided for it, when it fails to fulfill the law of its being. And this law is, that it

should become perfect, as its Father in heaven is perfect; consequently, that it should maintain the more exalted position assigned to it, and rule the lower forces, and not allow itself to be ruled by them. The spirit is bound to hold in abeyance the animal forces that reside in its body, to subdue the impure desires of the latter, and to look up to God and to the spiritual world to which it belongs. The spirit's law is conscience, yearning after perfection, abhorrence of all evil, and indestructible desire for freedom. If man allow his spirit to be conquered in its conflicts with the animal and plant-like parts of his nature, he becomes wretched and contemptible in his own eyes. For in the order of the universe everything is a concatenation of necessary consequences. Sin and imperfection give birth to suffering.

Man is consequently not preordained to be the victim of sin and corruption, but to be made happy through his perfections. If he firmly wills it, he can attain this perfection in all the relations of life. He may know beforehand, that when he feels sorrow or suffering there is something in himself which is not as it ought to be. The sorrow and suffering are in themselves his guides to happiness. This is his *destiny!*

Whatever fate may befall us, *we are consequently independent of it, in as far as we are what we ought to be.* Our dear ones may die, but we are not made unhappy by this, unless we forget that they and we are members of the spiritual world; that, as spirits, they cannot be lost to us; and that we ought not to allow ourselves to be attached to the perishable clay in the grave, as though it were imperishable. The death of the body was necessary in accordance with

the laws that rule that which is earthly ; our grief is the necessary consequence of our too great attachment to that which pertains to earth. This is destiny ! *But all things preordained by God are beneficent*, they strengthen our powers ; by gentleness they lure, or by terrible earnestness they force, the spirit to rise from that which is earthly and perishable to the knowledge and love of the imperishable, from the animal to the spiritual which constitutes our true dignity. Wars and battles, famine and misery, disease, robbery, and arson, come within the rules of destiny. But what are they ? Nothing more than the destruction of what is perishable. They point towards that which is imperishable, eternal ; that is, to that inward happiness of which nothing can deprive us. Thy despair at the misfortunes which befall thee, was it comprised in the doom of thy destiny ? Yes, because it is a necessary consequence of thine own imperfection. The peace of mind which the sage enjoys, in spite of every misfortune, is an equally necessary consequence of his greatness of mind, and of the conquering power of his soul.

The more virtuous and the more self-possessed the human spirit be, the more invulnerable it is, the more independent of destiny. God is raised above destiny because He is the All-Holy One. The more holy our inward being, the nearer we stand to God ; and the nearer we are to God, the higher we are lifted above the power of destiny.

Thus the apparent contradictions are dissolved into beautiful harmonies ; and from out of the darkness comes forth light. Everything must work for our good, everything must be on our side, because God is on our side. The preordinations of the Lord are

wise, just, and beneficent. Their end is not to make us slaves without a will of our own, but to give freedom to our spirits; they work with our spirits in order to raise them above fate. Oh what unbounded riches in the wisdom and knowledge of God! How impenetrable are his judgments, and how inscrutable his ways!

ETERNAL DESTINY.

PART II.

From forth the darkness, deep and vast,
By destiny our lot is cast;
Round all of earth her net she draws,
And the world owns her guiding laws.

But One there is, enthroned on high,
Beneath whose feet sits destiny,
Who binds together flesh and soul,
And holds e'en fate in his control.

For destiny is but God's slave;
He rules, his grace alone can save;
And mortals strive their game to make,
For destiny, that priceless stake.

And Jesus leads the spirit choir
Whose souls from dust to God aspire.
He Fate under subjection lays,
Who unto God his soul can raise.

(ISAIAH lv. 8, 9.)

INDIVIDUAL sages who lived and taught in remote antiquity, and subsequently entire nations, observed the rule of destiny in the course of human affairs, and all hearts trembled before the dread power thus recognized. Philosophic minds among the heathen endeavored to solve the fearful riddle. They called the eternal, inexorable power to which everything was subject, which nothing could resist, blind fate. On it, they believed, depended the lot of the meanest worm, as that of the most exalted man and

of every nation. Nay, even all the deities with which the imagination of mortals then peopled earth and heaven were, in their opinion, subject to this universal law ; even the mightiest of the gods were not beyond its power.

This belief in an all-ruling fate could not fail to arise among men who had not yet learnt to distinguish clearly between the world of matter and the world of spirit ; but who were, on the contrary, so steeped in the material, that physical and moral well-being were to them identical. Beauty, power, riches, honors, were their highest goods. For these they lived ; and as they recognized no deeper import in life, the value of their existence rose and sank in their eyes in proportion to the amount of these earthly advantages which fell to their lot. The fate which robbed them of these could therefore rob them of all. But very few individuals had any intuitive perception of a higher good, of which even the most relentless fate could not deprive man without his own consent. Still fewer had the courage to raise themselves above the power of fate through their own magnanimity of soul. Those, however, who did so awakened at that period already the surprise and the reverence of their fellow-men by the heroism of their virtues ; nay, the world was even inclined to place them among the gods.

The views of the Christians regarding this point are, however, very different from those of the heathen. Jesus led the human race back from the errors of the imagination and the understanding into the paths of eternal truth. He revealed to us the only God as the most perfect of all beings, and as the Father of spirits, whom we are to worship in spirit, and not with offerings and such like. He revealed to us that

the whole purpose of man's existence is not hedged in between the cradle and the grave, and He allowed us to cast a glance into the mysteries of eternity. He taught us to hold light the life on this earth, because this is not the true sphere of our happiness. "In my Father's house," said Jesus, "there are many mansions." He taught us to distinguish between the value of earthly and of heavenly or spiritual things. "If ye have but wherewithal to clothe and to feed your bodies," said Jesus, "then be content. Lay not up treasures for yourselves on earth, but in heaven, and seek before all things the kingdom of God. Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect. For what availeth a man if he gain the whole world, and he suffer damage to his soul?" He taught that the soul ought to have the mastery over the body, and pointed out the majesty of the spirit, and its superiority over every good this earth can afford. He showed, in his own life, how a man may rise above his fate, and render it powerless to affect him. He proved that the preordained course of things may indeed interfere with our earthly concerns, but that it is powerless to destroy our inward peace, or the bliss of our spirits.

Destiny or fate is consequently the divine law to which the material world only is subject. Bodily health and disease, life and death, the improvement or the decline in our earthly position, the increase or decrease of the consideration in which we are held, of our influence, or our power, the rise or fall of nations, victory or defeat on the field of battle,—all these, as things earthly, are subject to the law of destiny that rules all terrestrial matters.

But spirits are subject to a very different law. They

do not participate in the fate of that which pertains to earth. Their essence is freedom, their law virtue, their end likeness to God. The fate of the material world only regards them in as far as they are connected with matter. The less self-dependent they are, the more they incline to earthly things, the more they mix themselves up with the sublunary world, the more also they come under the law of destiny. He who places himself under a strange master must submit to his yoke. He who resigns his freedom and his self-control must be content to be treated as a slave. Therefore only he who places his happiness in outward things is really unhappy; therefore only the follower of Christ, the true sage, is really happy. To them that love God, all things (even the apparently most terrible) work for good.

Spirits are subject to a very different law from that which governs material things; therefore they suffer when they submit to a foreign yoke. In so doing they fall from their original dignity, they become unfaithful to their calling; they desire to be, not exalted spirits, but superior animals. Yet God still loves them. The law of destiny becomes their chastening rod, and drives them back to self-knowledge, urges them to lay hold on higher things. And through fearful disasters and misfortunes the voice of God speaks to them, saying: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah lv. 8, 9.)

We cannot, indeed, entirely dis sever the bonds which bind us to earth. Our place in the scale of spirits is still so low, that we must of necessity live in

immediate and close contact with the inferior beings of the universe. But it depends upon ourselves to rise to a higher rank in the scale. To help us to do so Jesus the Messiah was sent. He came to deliver us from the powers of darkness and the bonds of death, which hold in subjection all that is earthly. He came to help us reconquer our lost liberty. But his redeeming life will be of no avail to those who cannot deny themselves, who cannot renounce the world, who cannot, like Him, live a righteous, innocent, and unselfish life. His atoning death will prove of no avail to those who do not possess spiritual freedom and magnanimity of soul sufficient to wish to please God rather than man, and to die as the Saviour died.

We cannot entirely emancipate ourselves from earthly things ; but we must not allow ourselves to be mastered by our love for these, but maintain our freedom in regard to them. We are obliged and bound to seek food for our bodies ; but we are equally bound not to attach great importance to the gratification of our palates. We ought to dress with propriety ; but we must not allow ourselves to be so far conquered by a taste for outward show as to feel unhappy because we may no longer be able to appear in costly raiment. Purple, velvet, and silk are, after all, not far different from the winding-sheet in which a corpse is clothed. We ought to labor to improve our pecuniary means, in order that we ourselves, as well as those who belong to us, may be raised above dependence upon the caprice of others, and that we may be able to contribute the more to the furtherance of the public welfare ; but we must not seek our greatest happiness in the accumulation of riches, or pride ourselves upon possessing more than others ; and then,

should our circumstances ever be reduced, this will cause us no shame and no great unhappiness. We ought not to despise the good opinion of others, nor be indifferent to the influence we may exercise over them; but we ought never to seek consideration or influence except through our merits and our virtues. For only in as far as the public consideration in which a man is held is at the same time accompanied by, and has sprung from, public confidence, can it become a means of doing much good. But to thirst for consideration for its own sake only, to wish for power merely for the sake of possessing it, is to mistake the path leading to the goal for the goal itself, to mistake the means for the end, the instrument for the work it is meant to fashion. To stand high or low in this world's estimation, to enjoy rank and titles, or to have neither, is a matter of indifference to the immortal spirit, which knows that its true dignity resides within itself, and depends upon nothing outward; and that, not the distinction which is bestowed by man, but the worth which the spirit owes to its own efforts, is indestructible.

We cannot and must not disdain the pleasures and joys of life. They tend to refresh and enliven our whole being. But we must not cling to them with such passion, that when they pass away we feel as though we must pass away with them. We must love the objects of our affection, friends, parents, or children, with such tenderness as is natural to refined souls. But we ought not to forget that it is not their body that we love,—this will grow old and die,—but their spirit. We should ever bear in mind that their last hour on earth will and must come, but that all-ruling destiny cannot separate the spirit from the

spirit, but only the body from the body. He who founds his highest happiness on the life-breath of a mortal, founds it on a frail thing indeed. He who does not regard the universe as his Heavenly Father's house, who does not recognize the spirit as the object of his love, who does not see in immortality the guaranty of his happiness, let him beware of tender affection, if he would not love that which would destroy him, if he would not be the victim of a fearful destiny. For what he loves must one day become dust and ashes.

Raise yourselves above dust and ashes, ye chosen of God, ye followers of Christ! Enjoy the goods of this world, as sweet, fleeting, transient gifts, but lay up your treasures in heaven! Pluck the blooming rose, but forget not that to-morrow it will be withered and faded. Live *with* what is earthly, not *in* it, but in yourselves. Accept of every pleasure, but do not give yourselves up to it. Despise neither honors, nor dignities, nor riches, but do not sacrifice to them even the least of your higher duties; let the gifts of fortune be to you mere accidental advantages, for they cannot forever belong to you, and you belong still less to them. He who acknowledges no master but himself, his virtues, and his God, is master of all things; he is further removed than other men from the sorrows of this earth, and over him destiny holds no sway. He may be poor, despised, persecuted; he may lose his fortune, his comforts, his friends, the consideration in which he was held by others; but his inward contentment, his holy pride in his own worth, he need never lose. He is raised above fate. It is not to the world he owes his inward peace and happiness, and the world cannot rob him of them.

But to whom am I saying this? Who recognizes the eternal truth of Jesus's words, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you"? (Matt. vi. 33.) Oh, they have eyes and see not, they have ears and hear not! The great majority of men are absorbed in their earthly needs, and have no conception of higher wants. They believe in God, but bear no love to that which is Divine; they pray to God, but are the slaves of their own passions. They honor virtue, yet act viciously. They believe in immortality, yet give themselves entirely up to this world. They desire happiness, yet fly from it. They cannot gain-say the truth, yet cling to the delusions of their senses. They claim to be men, and superior beings, yet are content to remain nothing more than animals. They complain of the cruelty of fate, yet will not raise themselves above it by magnanimity of soul. They remain miserable, unhappy, in conflict with everything that surrounds them, and with themselves. They seek a means of escape, and find it not. The voice of God is loud in their hearts, yet they refuse to follow it. They deserve their misery, for it is their own choice. Therefore saith the Lord: "Your thoughts are not my thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. For as the heavens (and all spiritual things) are higher than the earth (and all that is earthly), so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

But to whom do I recall this? To the nations? Ah! behold their misery! This misery is the proof of their errors. How petty are the aims of all, or at least the greater number of the individuals who constitute the nations! What fruits can we expect from

such seed? What concord is there among them when the common danger is past? Where is their friendship when their self-interest is touched? Where is their patriotism when their individual advantage is at stake? Where is their moderation in prosperity? Why do they cherish in their own hearts that arrogance which they dislike so much in others? Why do they complain of that pride in others which they do not overcome in themselves? Why do they boast of the reverence they feel for the rights of nations, and yet attack these whenever it can be done without danger to themselves? Why do they praise honesty, and yet seek to overreach others? Ah! they have witnessed the effects of disunion, arrogance, and injustice; they have heard the warnings of universal history, but their hearts are hardened. They had Moses and the prophets, but they preferred to believe in their own falsities and follies. In the hour of need they raised aloft the banner of virtue to save themselves from destruction, but when the danger was over they deserted the sacred banner to prepare for themselves new misery. Thus let it be. Your fate is sealed. You cannot escape your destiny, for you have brought it upon yourselves. "My thoughts are not your thoughts," saith the Lord, "neither are my ways your ways; but as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than yours."

Among thousands, however, there may perhaps be one who recognizes God's thoughts and ways in the decrees of destiny; there may be one to whom his inward being, the consciousness of innocence, and the peace of God, are of more value than all outward

goods ; one who has given himself entirely to Christ, who acknowledges Him, not in the performance of church ceremonies, but in mind and heart, in willing and acting, in self-abnegation and self-control. Ah ! thou only one among thousands, thou art the happiest, because thee no destiny can assail. Thou art raised above every earthly fate.

Oh, I also, I also will strive for this peace, will seek to attain this height ! I will be thy brother, Jesus ! Saviour ! Thou didst enjoy divine happiness, though the world reviled Thee. Thy persecutors were seated upon thrones, and yet were slaves to their brutal passions ; but Thou wert a prince of life, a conqueror of death, and the power of destiny could not terrify Thee. The cross on Golgotha was thy trophy of victory ; the crown of thorns was thy crown of triumph.

I will strive in spirit to reach thy elevation, and the power of God will be mighty in me in spite of my weakness. I will accomplish it, I will be sole master of myself, I will control my feelings and my tendencies, so that I allow myself nothing but what is right, true, and useful ; so that I accept whatever the earth offers me that is beautiful and good, but without forfeiting in return my peace or the mastery over myself ; so that my inward freedom be not restrained by any outward fetters ; so that I may be rich even in poverty, and exalted even though of lowly estate ; so that I may belong to Thee, O Jesus, and to all pure and noble spirits. I must, I will accomplish this ! O Spirit of God, strengthen my determination ! Amen ! I shall succeed. Amen.

THE DESTINATION OF MAN.

Let the song of victory sound,
Christ for us has won the day
(Us, who to the grave were bound),
And chased the night of death away.
Nobly hath the work been wrought,
And for us the victory bought.

With what a noontide brightness, Lord,
Are his promises displayed;
How shines the truth of Heaven's word,
Man's soul is immortal made,
And before God's awful throne
Virtue shall receive the crown.

Sing not solemn dirges sadly
By the graves where good men lie;
For their spirits, brother, gladly
Wander in infinity:
Christ for all hath victory gained,
And the tyrant, death, enchained.

(2 COR. iv. 17, 18.)

JESUS CHRIST, our Lord, revealed to us in his own life on earth, as in a mirror, what we are, and what we ought to be. I recognize in Him what I ought to be. From the hour of his birth in the humble manger, until that of his glorification after his descent into the tomb, his life was a solemn indication of what the Deity wills that man should be. In obscurity and lowliness He was born, that we might learn that neither family descent nor rank, neither riches nor pomp, invest man with a nobility that has any worth in the sight of God. He died

poor; a stranger lent the site for the interment of his body, that we might learn that our destination on earth is not to lay up vain treasures and to attach ourselves to the things that are seen, but to strive after those things which are not seen. Nowhere do the Holy Scriptures tell us, that in the course of his life Jesus advanced in worldly honors and riches; but they do tell us that with years He increased in wisdom, and in knowledge of things divine. His beneficent life-task was to render men happy; He came to redeem mortals from falsehood and sin, and his spirit embraced in its love and mercy not only his contemporaries, but all those who should be born thousands of years after Him. And He as little neglected the least means of doing good as the greatest. He healed the blind and the lame, and succored the helpless. All this took place that we might learn, that our task in life is not only to attend to our business vocations, to take care that our families increase in rank and riches, but to grow perfect in every virtue, to improve in wisdom and in knowledge of God. For the good of mankind He met death, died wholly resigned to the will of God; his spirit rose above the most galling indignities,—above the severest mental pangs which ingratitude and treachery could inflict,—above the most cruel physical sufferings, when, exhausted by hunger, thirst, and ill-treatment, He sank down bleeding on the way to Golgotha; or when, nailed to the cross and jeered at by the multitude, He wrestled with death. But glorious was his triumph beyond the tomb; and all this was in order that we might learn that not earthly well-being, not the enjoyment of the pleasures of this world, are the purposes of our life; that neither want nor suffering ought to deaden in us

our love of the Divine, but that, whatever fate befall us, the eye of the spirit ought to be directed towards eternity, where the palm of victory and of glory awaits us when the death-struggle is over. "For," say the Holy Scriptures, "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.)

The day of victory of Him who has arisen from the dead reminds me of my future day of victory, of my higher destination.

But what is the destination of man? As yet the idea is not quite clear to me. To many, I know, the purpose of life is a riddle, and more especially to those who look at the things which are seen. Are we here that we may enjoy happiness and well-being in connection with virtuous sentiments? ask many. But how few persons enjoy unmixed happiness in a world where each hour brings an alternation of pleasure and pain; where one moment we are called to share the sorrows of others, the next we are made to groan under physical suffering, or to yield up our dearest wishes? Or how can the happiness that flows from virtuous sentiments and acts be ours, when each day we rise, like Peter, with the noblest resolves, and yet end it with laments over our own weakness?

What is the purpose for which God called me into being? Am I born merely to be the plaything of an hour, to fill for unknown ends a brief existence, extending only from the cradle to the grave, or to

serve the purposes of other beings to me unknown, who may be amused at my mirth or my tears? Shall I sink down, and fade away forever, in old age, like the flowers of the garden, like the tree of the forest, like the lion in the desert, or like an ephemeral insect? How can I reconcile such an idea as this with the conception of the infinite perfection of God? Why do I bear within me a lively consciousness of being in myself an end, not a means, — a consciousness which makes me feel that I exist for my own sake, and that I am, as it were, a central point of the universe which I behold around me? Why do I see before me high aims to attain which would be impossible in this short existence, while other creatures have no more qualities than are necessary to sustain their earthly life, to provide themselves with food, and to avoid pain and danger?

Thus even our unaided reason points to contradictions which would necessarily arise, were we to suppose that our destination is comprised within the narrow limits of this life.

But we know that man is spirit, and that the body is ashes, and only a vestment and instrument used by the spirit in this temporal existence, for the enjoyment of what is earthly. The body, or the animal envelope of our spirits, changes as years accumulate on our heads; the spirit increases in knowledge, but nevertheless feels that it is still the same that it has been since the first awakening of consciousness. The body clings tenaciously to the earth from which it came; the spirit never finds rest on earth, is never content with what it has attained, but when one wish is satisfied longs for the fulfillment of another, and again another, and so on without end.

The spirit, therefore, is the most essential and the enduring part of man ; that which is unseen and eternal constitutes its life, not that which is seen, or which is perishable ; its origin is divine, it springs not from earth. And as the body will one day return to its mother earth, so will the spirit return to the Divine bosom whence it emanated.

If my spirit be the essential part of me, then, when I speak of the destination of man, the question can only be as to the purpose for which his spirit was created ; about the body there can be no question. This is only a subordinate power existing for the sake of the spirit. And, again, if there be a question of the spirit, it can only be as to its vocation during an infinitely prolonged existence. But how can I know what ends the Deity has in view for it after the hour of death in this world ? So far my eye does not reach. And yet the voices of nature, of reason, and of revelation proclaim with wonderful harmony what I shall be hereafter, and what I am to hope for.

What is the lichen on the rock, the oak-tree on the mountain-side, the eagle in the air, intended to be ? Nothing more or less than what they are, and what alone they can be, in accordance with the peculiar powers or forces implanted in them by the Creator : moss, oak, and eagle ! Thus also the spirit, which conceives of God, shall become that which, in accordance with the special powers implanted in it, it may, through the infinite periods of its existence, raise itself to be, namely, a being who through endless self-improvement is ever drawing nearer to God ; an essence higher than a thousand other subordinate forces that live and act in this world, and living and acting independently of these, but understanding them and

governing them, and growing without cessation in knowledge which will reveal to it the greatness of God and the grandeur of creation, in ever clearer and more enrapturing light. This is the eternal, the all-important glory that awaits us; *i. e.*, those among us who look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. This is the object of the vague yearnings within our souls; this is the meaning of that commandment of the glorified Saviour, wherein He disclosed the true destination of man, "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matt. v. 48.)

To become like unto God is then my destination, — to let my spirit grow in the divine likeness through infinite progression. The truth of this, first revealed to me through Jesus, is confirmed by my reason and by my experience of life on earth. For even the things of this world all impel me in that direction. All things encourage the spirit to extend its mastery over that which is merely sensual, and to hold this in contempt, — to elevate itself above the chances of outward circumstances and of fate. To do this is to grow in likeness to God. For in wisdom and knowledge, as in supreme happiness-diffusing influence on the universe, and in perfect independence of fate, God is infinitely great and exalted. Life on earth is given to train the spirit for its sublime destination; but this training is not completed here, but will continue without ceasing in far distant spheres of life, while our happiness will increase with our perfection.

All things stimulate the spirit to extend its knowledge and wisdom. Even for this man is born naked and defenseless, that he may exert and develop his mind in efforts for his own sustenance and protection.

The animal enters life ready clothed, and provided with natural weapons of defense, and with unconscious instincts to seek the herbage, fruit, or carrion which it requires for its nourishment, and which it finds at once. Thousands of years have passed since the creation and peopling of this globe. The animals have made no progress in knowledge or wisdom. Not so man, who is ever impelled forwards by the wants and sufferings and cravings of his nature. At first he lived in caverns, next in huts built of the boughs of trees, then in well-contrived, comfortable, self-invented dwellings. At first his hands and nails, next rude wooden and stone implements, were his only aids ; then he descended into the bowels of the earth, and brought forth thence the numerous metals which doubled his strength, and helped him to subjugate the animals. The tiger was then no longer too strong for him, nor the fox too cunning, nor the eagle too far above him in the air. At first he clung timidly to the spot of earth where he was born ; but soon he roamed into other regions, learnt to communicate his thoughts through means of artificial tones, and acquired a knowledge of foreign languages ; and next he crossed the wide ocean from one quarter of the globe to another, and by means of written symbols communed with friends dwelling in far distant lands which his own foot had never trodden. At first he trembled at the thunder of the clouds, and gazed with vague wonder only at the stars of heaven ; subsequently the idea of a Deity took birth in him. He sought the Deity ; but in the commencement worshipped Him in the thunder, the fire, and the stars. Then he began to conceive that neither of these were God, but only created things, and he prayed to the

Unseen, — until, when mankind had become capable of receiving it, the full light was given through Jesus Christ.

And thus the human spirit, driven by the necessities of life, progressed without ceasing from invention to invention, from knowledge to knowledge. That which in the present day is known to every youth, would, thousands of years ago, have excited the wonder of the most experienced sage. What will mankind be after another six thousand years of progressive knowledge ?

Already we know the immeasurable magnitude of the universe, the size and orbits of the heavenly bodies in closest proximity to us, the plains, and mountains, and the light that clothes the moon, the sun, and the distant planets ; the wonderful powers of the atmosphere, of light, and of innumerable other works of nature. But God the All-wise knows all, while the wisest of mortals as yet knows only a drop in the ocean of the universe. To grow like unto God is the destination of the spirit.

Towards this the whole organization of the universe is impelling us. Everything incites us to extend our dominion over the world of sense, and tends to develop the consciousness of our superior dignity as spirits, as feeble images of God. The will of the spirit, and the desires and instincts of the flesh, or of our sensual nature, are in constant conflict. This is the twofold law within us, of which Paul the Apostle speaks. In the flesh originate all tendencies to sin, to pride, to envy, to revenge, to luxury ; in the spirit originate our longings after holiness, our yearnings for the divine, the unseen, and stable. In vain the feeble spirit seeks contentment in the temporal ; it is

ever repelled by the latter, and thrown back upon itself. In vain the spirit, forgetting its dignity and destination, seeks its happiness in the gifts of this life. Beauty and strength perish; fame is overshadowed; luxury creates disease; riches and earthly goods are ever changing hands, and cannot follow us beyond the grave; parents, friends, husbands, wives, children, all die, none remain, nothing on earth can secure to us lasting happiness. All things impel us to turn away from the seen to the unseen!

Sin is spiritual slavery, virtue spiritual freedom. Sin is dominion of the flesh, virtue is dominion of the spirit. In vain the spirit would forget that it is free, and ought to govern the desires arising out of its earthly nature; in vain it would be at ease, and avoid exertions and conflicts, give itself up to sensual well-being, and seek no higher wisdom than to elude that which is disagreeable, and to secure the enjoyment of that which is exciting, pleasurable, and honorable in ordinary social life; in vain it resists the warnings of conscience; in spite of all, the entire order of the universe, which is but a great school of spirits, incites us again and again to reassert our dominion over sensual influences, and to hold light all that is of this earth. For every sin is followed by its own peculiar punishment. Deceit is followed by fear of detection, dissoluteness by painful diseases, intemperance by enervation. For the spirit there is neither rest nor peace until it has conquered all the passions that war against it, until it has learnt to be just, truthful, independent of base prejudices and sensual desires, and has found the highest bliss in the consciousness of virtue. This is being like unto God.

For this purpose, the spirit is further impelled by everything that surrounds it to look at all matters from a proper point of view, and to judge and apply them accordingly; every error of judgment entails suffering. Towards this likeness to God everything impels it until it is not only raised above the enchantment of the senses, but above the power of fate. The various fortunes that befall men are but God's missionaries sent to instruct and improve; they are connected with earthly matters only. When avalanches fall, when nations are subjugated or liberated, when flames devour houses and other property, and war lays countries waste, when illness comes upon us without any fault of our own, and friends breathe their last in our arms, — all these events affect us in our earthly connections only. The more independent the spirit of the Christian is of all earthly things, the more exalted he is above the events connected with them. He may be rich or poor, be living in superfluity or in want, may meet with friendship or with persecution; but in none of these cases is there anything that can impair his love of Christ, of virtue, and of the Deity. The world can give him nothing which he is not willing patiently to resign again. Life itself has not more value in his eyes than duty. He fears not death; and he who fears not death, nor poverty, nor the judgments of men, what power can fate have over him? He is a spirit like God; he bears his happiness, his highest good, within himself, and no fate can destroy it. Like unto a divinity he stands above all the storms of life, fearing them not in the consciousness of his innocence and his righteousness. This is to be like unto God; this is the destination of man!

And to this destination, which I am to reach through endless progress, I ought, I can, and I will draw nearer here on earth already. Jesus walked the earth in human form, and endowed with human qualities ; and yet He extended his knowledge of divine things, and He conquered his earthly desires, and rose above his fate. He had friends ; He loved the tender-hearted disciple that rested his head on his bosom ; nevertheless, his soul did not cling exclusively and passionately to individuals. " All men and women," said He, " are my brothers and sisters." He was not indifferent to the good things of this world ; He was present at the marriage-feast in Cana, and did not refuse the costly ointment offered to Him as a gift by a pious, reverent, and grateful heart ; nevertheless, He renounced every sensual enjoyment without a sigh ; often He had no place to lay his head, and He made no effort to avoid death when duty bade Him give his life for the salvation of sinners. But a day of victory awaits all godlike spirits, and *He* was glorified beyond the grave.

If this be the destination of man, then woe is me, for how often have I not forgotten it ! Woe is the world, for what confusion of mind does there not reign therein ! Can it be that nature, and reason, and revelation have ceased to have a meaning, and that Jesus, the Saviour, has not risen from the dead ? For I see men busy about all other matters, but not thinking of those things which are not seen. They sacrifice pleasure, health, and life for the attainment of other things, but not to improve in spirit, to grow in likeness to God. They pride themselves upon their cleverness ; the one claims to excel the other herein ; each is anxious to turn time and circumstances cun-

ningly to his own advantage; but who is there that aspires towards that magnanimity of spirit that enables a man to rise above fate, above time and circumstances, above hope and fear?

Alas! and when I look at the mass of the people, what spiritual darkness do I behold! A deep yearning for divine things there is in all hearts; to all religion is something sacred, the eyes of all are turned to heaven, all seek to penetrate the mysterious depths of eternity; but what a melancholy idea they form of their destination, what an unworthy conception of the Majesty of God. They believe that they can purchase their rise in the scale of beings with senseless prayers and church ceremonies, while living as slaves of their animal nature. Here on earth they would lead a life of luxury, and for their fate in the next world they would rely on the intercession of saints, or on the merits of Jesus Christ. Thus, they think, they will obtain their glorification. They would fain enjoy their heaven here below, believing that their good deeds and their prayers are quite worthy of a heavenly reward. They do good merely for the sake of the recompense, and avoid evil merely from fear of punishment. Their conception of heaven is that of an ever-enduring life of sensual enjoyment. And all these errors are disseminated by the help of unprincipled persons, who allow themselves to be called priests of the Almighty God, and teachers of the doctrines of Jesus; and magistrates see the deplorable ignorance of the people, and look on with indifference, neglecting their duty to introduce better educational institutions, so that the knowledge of divine things might be spread even among the humblest classes. Is it possible that mankind has so completely

forgotten its high destination, that not even a vague and dream-like remembrance of it survives? Is not Christ risen, who preached, "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect!" But if we do not despair of our destination, and have not lost our belief in the truth of God, why do we live as though there were no eternity? Why do we form to ourselves an image of the Highest Being, far less noble and exalted than we would form of a human being who was described to us as just, and incorruptible, and wise?

Jesus, they honor Thee with their lips, but their hearts are estranged from Thee. They make themselves preachers of thy holy word, not because they desire to follow Thee, but in order to secure to themselves the comforts of life! They make themselves dependent upon outward circumstances, upon narrow-minded prejudices, and petty desires; they, who as eternal spirits ought to be exalted, as Thou wert once, above the unalterable laws that rule all earthly matters! Not all do this it is true!—Yet the number of thy true confessors and followers is, alas! but very small.

Jesus, my divine example in life, in suffering, and in death, I celebrate to-day in my heart the festival of thy victory and glorification,—may it be also the festival of the victory of my spirit over all sensual influences. I recognize the purpose for which I was created, and the thought of it fills me with holy rapture. As Thou camest forth from the grave, so will I come forth from my errors, and enter into a higher spiritual life; so will I come forth from the slavery of my passions, and enjoy liberty and mastery over myself. And not content with doing this, I will endeavor

to awaken others also to a recognition of their exalted destination ; I will strive to make my fellow-men feel their sublime vocation ; I will praise thy greatness, O Father in heaven, in my home, in the circle of those with whom Thou hast linked me together here on earth ; and by my sentiments, words, and deeds I will endeavor to prove and to make acceptable to all the truth, that amid the things which we see is not our lasting home, but amid the things which we do not see, in the abodes of Eternity. That neither riches, nor rank, nor fame, nor other fleeting goods of this life, but self-improvement, growth in likeness to God, ought to be the great object of every spirit, in order that “ we may be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect.” Amen.

IMMORTALITY.

How shall I know myself for joy, the change how understand,
When God himself shall take me hence to his own better land?
What different names the things will bear which once I deemed Divine,
When in that bright and blessed home God's glories round me shine.

As there is but one Lord of all, one God who reigns in heaven,
So unto all created things one life alone is given;
And through creation's wide domain for death we find no place;
The law of change prevails for all, — extinction none can trace:
I know my soul shall ever dwell, when freed from earthly stains,
Where in eternal majesty Christ, my Redeemer, reigns.

(MARK xvi. 1-14.)

THE festival of the Resurrection of Jesus, after his death on the cross, may be considered as also celebrated by us in joyful commemoration of our own immortality. His resurrection from the grave reminds us of the great transformation which our souls also shall one day undergo. The soul is not dust like the body, and never can become dust. As all the powers of the universe created by the Almighty are eternally active, so also will my spirit remain eternally active. Jesus, our example in life, is also our example in death, and his resurrection is an indication of what we have to expect after death.

There are three great ideas bearing upon the most sacred interests of man, and compared with which all others sink into utter insignificance; three ideas which the mind of man alone, of all God's known creatures, can comprehend, and which form the most sacred treasures of all souls, — without which, indeed,

man would cease to be man. These are: the conception of an all-ruling Deity, — the belief in the possibility of drawing nearer to God by growing in perfection, — the hope in eternity.

He who treasures in his mind these three sacred ideas, follows in the footsteps of Jesus; he is in the way of salvation; he will ever enjoy that peace of soul which is a foretaste of the heavenly bliss that awaits us hereafter.

If the thought of the imperishable nature of the soul and the infinite goodness of God were at all times vividly present to men's minds, we should witness less levity, less vanity, and less heartlessness, and we should experience less fear and awe of death.

Therefore will I this day endeavor to fill my mind with the glorious thought: There is a God, and I am his work, and am forever indestructible! I will meditate upon my higher destination, upon the more exalted existence which is in store for me, and gladden myself with the hope which Jesus has given me, and which God himself has implanted, not only in the heart of the Christian, but in that of every human being that treads the earth.

I am born for eternity. Christ has given me the assurance thereof. A day will come when I shall no longer belong to this, but to another world, in which I shall enjoy a higher or a lower degree of happiness, according as my soul has prepared itself in this earthly life for the future existence. (John v. 28; 2 Cor. v. 10.)

I am called to eternal life. This body, in which I am now clothed, has been borrowed from the earth, and will return to earth. But that which is incorruptible cannot perish, cries a voice to me from the

Holy Scriptures. My spirit will enter into new relations, and clad, as it were, in nobler raiment, it will be susceptible of nobler enjoyments. It is in vain for us to search into, and ponder upon, what may be the real nature of these wonderful changes. It is folly to wish to have a knowledge of the state of the soul after death. Can human weakness penetrate the secrets of the Infinite Power? Can human blindness scan the nameless depths of Infinite Wisdom? How could that be made clear to us for which human language has no words, and for which the things of this earth offer no analogy? Even St. Paul deprecated such vain endeavors of inquisitive minds, and to explain that which takes place after death he has but obscure images. (1 Cor. xv. 35, 44.)

Let it be enough for every Christian that he has acquired the tranquillizing conviction that a life awaits him which, from the beginning of time, was preordained for him. There God will wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor weeping, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. (Rev. xxi. 4.)

Only a few minutes before his death, Jesus, the Saviour of the world, gave the sweet hope of immortality to the criminal crucified by his side. With dying voice Jesus said, "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

God revealed to *all* mortals alike the eternal and imperishable nature of the human spirit. All nations of the earth believe in the continued existence of their souls after death, though the one people has not received the blessed intelligence from the other. But the Deity has so organized the laws of human

reason, that as soon as the mind has acquired a certain power of thought, it is spontaneously impelled to believe in the infinite future that awaits it.

All religions, therefore, hold out this consolation, and even the heathen, when weeping over the corpse of one he loves, does not fail to lift his tearful eyes to the home beyond the grave. This universal agreement, this universal belief, is God's voice within us!

How, indeed, should the abhorrent thought of eternal annihilation enter the mind of man, when all nature, the entire creation of God, bears witness to the contrary? Nothing that is in the world can ever be lost out of it. The grain of dust which you trample under foot was once part of a rock. The rock has ceased to exist, but its constituent parts are still present. And if the most insignificant of things endures forever, though in time it may undergo a thousand changes of condition and combination, can we believe that the noblest and most exalted of created beings known to us, the spirit of man, should be an exception? When we see that the grain of dust will remain in the universe as long as the universe itself endures, can we believe that the soul of man, which alone can conceive of God and immortality, will last but for a few brief moments?

Two things are recognized in the domain of creation, ever distinct from each other, namely, dead matter, and certain hidden forces which unite and vivify the particles of that matter. These flowers, which owe nothing to the tending hand of man, spring from the earth. The plant, it is true, draws nourishment from water, earth, air, and light, but not every particle of earth or every ray of light becomes a plant. There is a secret power present, which causes the

grass to be grass, and the oak to be an oak, and nothing else. This secret power, which may, so to say, be regarded as the soul of the plants, knows how to draw towards each the nourishment most suited for it. Through means of this invisible, inexplicable power, the flowers have become flowers.

What sayest thou now, Is it the dead substances which, in combining, generate a mysterious force? or is it the secret kingdom of the forces that play with the dead matter, and give it manifold forms, life, movement, and enjoyment? If dead matter cannot disappear from the universe, thinkest thou that the forces, the higher and nobler elements, can cease to exist? When the plant is abandoned by its indwelling force, and it withers and returns to dust, has the power that once vivified it vanished from the universe? Nay, thou dost not perceive it, but it is still active under other conditions.

The same is the case as regards the human spirit, which is an infinitely higher and more wonderful power, so much so, indeed, that none of the other forces with which we are acquainted can be compared with it. And who can be unreasonable enough to believe that our bodies, composed of earthly matter, have produced the spirits within them, — that when the body returns to dust, the spirit must also perish? Is it not the spirit that takes care of, nourishes, and protects the body; that directs its movements, and arbitrarily uses it as its instrument?

Verily those only can be insane enough to doubt immortality who feel that their lives have not been such as to deserve it, or who have reason to fear it. But they endeavor in vain to delude themselves, to destroy their own reason! A voice within them cries

aloud, Thy soul cannot perish ! It must continue to exist, and must appear before the judgment-seat ! Sinner, sinner, there is a God ; and as true as there is a God, thou art immortal, and thy deeds will follow thee into eternity.

The human soul, that spark from the infinite ocean of divine light, that sublime power which holds dominion over plants, minerals, and animals, which can raise itself to heaven, which calculates the movements of the spheres, and which, through an inward revelation, has become conscious of its divine origin, — this spirit, whose thoughts fly across mountains and seas, and penetrate to the throne of the Almighty, this spirit is a self-dependent essence. It exists for itself, and for naught else, nor as part of anything. It creates, as it were, a little world for itself. It is connected with the rest of creation through its senses only, while observing the many changes that take place round it, and developing new power through them. If the human spirit were not created for itself alone, if it existed for the sake of other things, it would lose its value and cease to be, as soon as these other things, of which it formed a part, disappeared. The spirit does not exist on account of the body, on account of the dust vivified by it, on account of this mere instrument, but the body exists on account of the spirit. It is the animating and guiding principle of the body.

And the spirit's wonderful consciousness of its self-dependence, the firm conviction which it possesses that it exists for its own sake solely, and not as part of other things, is the divine guaranty of its immortality. In like manner the most exalted of spirits, the Deity, the Creator, is not a part of the universe,

is not part of aught else, but is self-existent and eternal. Yea, he who doubts the immortality of his own soul, may also, in such moments of fearful mental aberration, doubt thy existence, O God!

If we observe the unreasoning brutes, with their blind instincts and their capabilities, we perceive that all the powers with which the Creator has so wonderfully endowed them are necessary for, and conducive to, the support of life, and the attainment of such objects as they may have in life.

Now, were the human spirit created merely for this fleeting life on earth, it would not have required the many and superior faculties which the hand of God has bestowed on it. Had it received, like the rest of the animals, blind instincts to guide it, these would have sufficed in its case also to provide nourishment and support for the body it animates.

But of what use are the glorious faculties of our minds? Why are we, by a wonderful concatenation of circumstances, forced into improving these faculties? Why should we possess a knowledge of God, if this God, before whose throne our spirits worship, is not our eternal Father? Why did the hand of the All-merciful God implant in our hearts this undying yearning for continuous life, if it were meant never to be satisfied? Were the immortality of the soul a delusion, would not man, with his superior knowledge and qualities, be far more to be pitied than the humblest of animals? The latter knows not of death; it takes no care for the coming hour. Why has God, the All-wise, endowed us with the faculty of anticipating the future? Skeptic, wouldst thou dare to utter the blasphemous answer, "That we may be the more unhappy"? Are we then to suppose that God has glori-

ously manifested his wisdom in stones, in plants, and in animals; but that in man He has failed utterly? The animals attain, through means of their inferior capabilities, as great contentment, and as high a degree of perfection, as their nature is capable of; but man, with his far higher faculties, does not attain to anything approaching the perfection of which his nature is susceptible. This life, therefore, does not suffice for the fulfillment and attainment of our destination. We bear within us the germ of a perfection of infinite growth, and therefore infinitude must have been a condition of our creation, or the world is a chaos, and the wisdom of God is at variance with itself, — a thought that none but a madman can entertain.

Thou believest in a God, and yet, O rash and insensate man! thou wouldst, in thy aberration, deny the manifestations of his wisdom in the wonderfully organized universe. Every star, every blade of grass, thine own conscience, all the events of thy life, all the nations of the earth, proclaim it in a thousand tongues, He is! He is!

And if there be a God, and He be an all-perfect and all-holy Being, how durst thou doubt his justice? He who does not believe in the immortality of the soul, and in a retributive justice dwelling above the stars, he believes in an imperfect God, he believes that man's mind conceives a higher justice than the acts of the Most Holy One manifest.

For how can it be reconciled with divine justice, that excellent men and women, that pious Christians, who have suffered the direst misfortunes on earth for the sake of virtue, and without any fault of their own, should suffer thus, if there were no future com-

pensation of supreme bliss for what they have here endured ; that bad men, that heartless tyrants, should spend their days amid pomp and pleasure, and be allowed unpunished to inflict upon their innocent fellow-men, upon individuals, families, and whole nations, intolerable evils and misfortunes ? If there be no supreme judge and no retributive justice in the universe, what mortal here on earth would venture to follow the dictates of virtue ?

True, it is said that virtue is its own reward, — alas ! not always. How many have not sacrificed every joy of life for righteousness' sake, and died under great suffering, faithful to the last to the divine laws ! No ; it is as little an unfailing rule on earth that virtue brings its own reward, as it is that vice always brings its own punishment. But patient Christians, as well as shameless sinners, have an intuitive belief in another world, and that eternal retribution dwells above the stars !

Yea, above the stars dwells the Eternal Judge, meting out retributive justice. Weep not, suffering friend of virtue ; despair not, persecuted and forsaken innocence ; the day of thy triumph will come. Bear thy cross courageously to the grave, as did Jesus ; like Him, thou shalt live eternally.

We are immortal ! not forever shall we be the prey of death. O, ye poor orphans, why do you lament so disconsolately by the grave of your father, your mother ? O father ! O mother ! why pine so at the death of your child ? It has but preceded you into a better world. You are immortal, and you will find your lost treasure again, — God has willed it so. Your fate in regard to this was eternally preordained when the plan of the world was laid. God will also

call you away ; you will one day be happy in the blessed regions, while others will be weeping for you on earth.

We are immortal ! — Sinner, well mayst thou turn pale ! The soul of that man, too, is immortal whom thou didst persecute with thy hatred and thy slanderous tongue ; immortal is also the starving wretch whom thou didst refuse to help, that thou mightest have the more to spend on thine own luxuries ; immortal the soul of the innocent girl seduced by thee, and thus robbed by thee of her every joy in life ; and immortal, like thine own, O proud man ! is the soul of thy fellow-man whom thou tramplest under foot as thou dost the worm in the dust.

We are immortal ! — O Christian, O meek follower of Jesus, the souls of those also are immortal on whom thou hast bestowed thy good gifts. They will bear witness in thy favor before God. The tears which thou hast wiped from the eyes of sufferers will be transmuted into happiness for thee. The children whom with pious heart thou art educating for eternity will never be torn away from thee. They will be hereafter as they are here, the souls most closely akin to thine own.

We are immortal ! God, my God ! nameless, merciful, wise, and just God, in this hope is comprised all my earthly happiness. In thy world there is no death, only life ! And that which we call death is only transformation. Thy entire universe is life. Thou thyself art Life ! How, then, could I be in Thee, and cease to exist ? Thou hast not called me into existence for this short dream of life on earth, — Thou chocest me for eternity, and Jesus who has risen

from the dead shows me in his holy teachings the way to reach it. (Col. iii. 2.)

Oh what inexpressible joy takes possession of my soul! what rapture quickens the pulsations of my heart, at the thought of eternal existence! Sorrows of life, hours of suffering, what are ye? — passing shadows that leave no trace behind them. Warnings from God to follow the holy teachings of Christ. Warnings from my Heavenly Father to remind me that I am called to eternal life.

O my Father, I will cling closely to Thee! Through thy will I am immortal, and penetrated by thy Holy Spirit, I will endeavor to make myself worthy of immortality. I will throw off my faults like defiling dust; I will devote myself to God; for I am immortal. With longing heart I strive to raise myself up to Thee, O Eternal Father! Receive me and mine into thy glory! Amen.

WHY MUST THE FUTURE LIFE BE HIDDEN FROM US?

Yes, I believe ; but clothed in dust,
How weak is still the strongest trust,
How oft my wavering faith hath failed,
And wished its hope to sight revealed !

For me, Thou Life by which I live,
Oh let thy Spirit witness give ;
Death is not death, — 't is leaving earth,
For nature's second, nobler birth.

When once this transient life shall fail,
Thy hand shall draw away the veil, —
The veil that dims to mortal eye
The vision of eternity.

(2 COR. v. 7.)

HOW often, when meditating on the future destiny of the soul, do not mortals say, "If we but knew how we shall fare in that future life ! If we had but some slight indication of what will be the state of the spirit after the death of the body ! If we had but some little knowledge of the abode into which the spirit will pass, some shadowy insight into its destination there, some faint prefigurement of its joys and sorrows in eternity ! "

Such wishes and questionings are pardonable. They do not, however, so much manifest the soul's noble longing for knowledge as they betray common curiosity and impatience. For the desire for knowledge will easily be satisfied with the conviction that the day will infallibly come when we shall know and

experience it all, and that it will come as soon as it is good for us. But curiosity will not rest content with this ; it wishes for knowledge merely to satisfy its craving ; it is like the inquisitive child, who, though certain that at a given time it will receive a gift from its tender parents, yet uselessly endeavors before the time comes to divine what the gift will be.

Therefore human folly has ever been busy endeavoring to discover by subtle investigation the secrets of eternity. Therefore there have come into existence as many notions and fancies regarding the future life as there have been persons who have allowed their imaginations free play respecting the subject. Among the Jews as among the Turks, among the heathen as among the Christians, the most contradictory ideas prevail about the state of our immortal spirits after death, — ideas which are often highly unworthy of the greatness and majesty of God.

Some believe that in the next world the soul will live in a state of sensual bliss, in the midst of lovely groves and gardens, where are spread richly-decked boards, at which they may feast whenever they please. Others believe that the soul sleeps in the grave until the great day of judgment shall come, when the dead shall arise and stand forth to receive their reward. Others, again, believe that, until the last day of the world, the souls will wander about partly under the earth, partly near the entrance to hell, partly in the air, partly in the vicinity of heaven ; and that they have the power to reveal themselves to living men at certain times, particularly during the night, in the form of ghosts, and thus to create terror for no reason or purpose. Others, again, think that the spirits of the departed roam about in some paradise, where

their greatest happiness consists in remembering and recounting the deeds performed by them in their former existence. Others teach that before the soul is admitted into paradise, or the place of eternal joy, it must undergo a period of probation, during which it will be cleansed of all the earthly wishes and cares and impurities that may still cling to it, in order that it may ultimately enjoy unmixed bliss.

In vain, however, has human curiosity endeavored to force open the gates of eternity, in order to discover that which lies beyond. It has never succeeded. The darkness in which God has wrapped the land of the future remains impenetrable; and of the dead, not one has yet come back to unveil to inquisitive man the secrets of the world of spirits.

Foolish speculations on this subject have never led to any useful or beneficent result. Men have tortured themselves with their own dreams. They have created for themselves terrific images, which have no existence except in their own heated brains. They have peopled their imaginations with ghosts, or supposed visible spirits, which in their timidity they fancy they see and hear everywhere. They have spread, in consequence, not the realm of wisdom, but the realm of superstition; not the kingdom of God, but the kingdom of error and of heathenish fables. They have been less intent upon becoming like unto Jesus in feeling and actions, than upon disputations about their fancies and opinions. They have hoped more from long and formal prayers, from sacrifices and outward discipline, from fastings and purifications, than from following the example of Jesus in virtuous sentiments and works of love. Finally, they have placed the value and essence of Christianity more in

certain dogmas and in faith, than in doing those things that are pleasing to God, as they are enjoined to do by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount, and by the Apostles in all their speeches and epistles. In vain St. James cries to them, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" In vain Thou criest to them, O Jesus Christ, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." They persist in their melancholy conceit; superstitious ceremonies, formal prayers, outward religious observances are to them more than the call of Jesus, more than the warning love of Christ.

Let me then sedulously avoid all mere curiosity on this solemn subject; let me shun all notions and suppositions as to the state of departed souls, which may induce superstitious and irrational fears, and lead me to have recourse to unmeaning ceremonies. On earth there is for me but *one* great Revealer of divine and heavenly things, and this is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. He alone is my light, my loadstar in the darkness; and all else that human beings, be they ever so wise and holy, would reveal to me concerning eternal life, is only human conceptions, only their special views.

But Jesus, who dwelleth ever in eternity, who was there in the beginning, and will be there evermore, — Jesus has assured me that my soul is immortal; yet He shed no light upon its state in the next life. He taught us that the soul of man, after its liberation from the body, would be removed into a higher and happier sphere, which God had prepared for it from

the beginning ; therefore He said to his companion on the cross, " To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise." He taught that our spirits must prepare here on earth for eternity ; that here already they belong to the great kingdom of God ; that this kingdom of God does not consist in outward signs, but is *within us*, in the virtuous and perfect mind. " The kingdom of God," said He, " is within you." (Luke xvii. 21.) He taught that according as each mortal in this life makes himself worthy of higher perfection and of a more blissful state, so will it be meted out to him hereafter. There every one will be judged by his words, his thoughts, and his deeds, and receive the reward he merits. (Matt. xxv. 34-46.)

With these explanations as to what we have to look forward to in eternity, the disciples of Christ must be satisfied. They know the value of eternal life, and to them the promises concerning it must bring joy. Here, on earth, " we walk by faith, not by sight ! "

And why should I not be satisfied with the revelations given in the Holy Scriptures ? Why should not that which Jesus has promised be sufficient to tranquillize me ? Why should I rather listen to the promptings of my restless curiosity, than to the wisdom of my Divine Redeemer and Comforter ?

Had the Deity thought it good for mankind that we should be able to look into eternity, and to penetrate its secrets, the power of doing so would have been bestowed upon us. But the Omniscient would not that it should be so ; and we may therefore conclude that the faculty of following the spirits along their path in eternity would not be conducive to our happiness and well-being. It is withheld from us

until the important hour when we shall ourselves become denizens of eternity.

Thy inquisitive desire to solve the mysteries of the future world is therefore culpable, is unworthy of thy profession as a Christian, proves a want of trust in the wisdom and fatherly love of God. Be assured, that the knowledge of that which the Lord conceals from thee would render thee unhappy. Are there not in like manner many things which mortal parents conceal from their children in infancy, but which are communicated to them when they reach a riper age? Too early a disclosure of these matters might be injurious to the welfare of the entire family, or be hurtful to the children themselves. Who would blame the wisdom and prudence of these anxious parents, who in this very withholding of knowledge give a proof of their affection for their children? Will not the child himself in later years thank his parents for their reticence?

And the same is the case with man in regard to God! We also shall one day, when death breaks the dark seal of the mystery, recognize the wisdom of the all-loving Father, and stammer forth our thanks. We also shall smile at the futility of our endeavors, at the childishness of our fancies, respecting the eternal future. We also shall then repent with justice of our want of trust in the Eternal Wisdom and Mercy.

However incapable we may be, while dwelling here in the dust, and with our limited faculties, of understanding the councils and the exalted ends of the Most High, it is much easier for us to divine why the hand of God has veiled to our eyes the face of eternity, than it is to lift this veil, even in the least degree.

The less we know with certainty that which awaits us after this life, the purer, the more unselfish, will our virtue be on earth.

What is Christian virtue? Wherein consists the holiness which Jesus demands of us? In self-improvement, self-bestowed blessedness. Christian duty, as Christ understood it, must have no other end than itself; it must not be a means to secure this or that advantage; it must not be a mere measure of prudence.

What value is there in that virtue which makes me give alms to the poor in order that I may gain honor among men, — which makes me avoid enmities in order that my life may be more easy, — which leads me to afford help that I may be helped in my turn, — that induces me to perform acts of public utility that I may win popularity, — that makes me act honestly in order to gain confidence, — that makes me amiable in manner in order that I may be praised, — that makes me show friendship to those who may show me friendship in return? Is this virtue, as Jesus understood it? Nay, it is but prudence! It is a calculation how to gain great advantages by means of small sacrifices. “For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do you more than others?” No; “ye must be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect”; that is to say, your goodness must be without selfishness, you must not debase your virtue into a mere measure of prudent calculation, you must expect no higher reward than is comprised in that virtue itself.

He who does not love it for its own sake, oh he can never have known it! A child who is only obedient

when he is promised a reward is not a wise or good child, but a calculating and selfish one.

God is perfect, because He is God, and in his own perfection He finds the highest bliss. God is perfect, not in order to gain outward advantages ; and He is merciful, gracious, and beneficent, not in order that weak man, a poor worm in the dust, should worship Him. And in *this* spirit Jesus tells us to be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect.

We are to improve ourselves, to become holy through the practice of every virtue, not in order to receive some other reward, but because in this improvement and sanctification is comprised the happiness of the spirit. The most virtuous and the wisest man is the happiest, simply because he is the most perfect. That which he was here below, that his spirit will remain on entering eternity ; and his reward in that better life is, that he is allowed ever to approach nearer to the Divine perfection, ever to grow in likeness to God.

If any one avoid evil from fear of punishment, he is prudent but not virtuous. If any one refrain from stealing from fear of chains and prison, shall we therefore call him pious ? Who can assure me that he would not steal if there were no chains, no prison ? If any one refrain from sin through fear of hell, is he therefore righteous ? Or, when any one does good in this life in the hope that he will be richly rewarded in the next, is he therefore a saint, in the spirit of Jesus ? If he had no hope, or only a vacillating hope, of future reward, would he act equally well ? And if not, is his selfish virtue other than a well-calculated means to purchase a great good for a small outlay ; to gain, at the price of a small sacrifice of a few minutes' duration, an eternity of bliss ?

Nay, it is a beneficent arrangement that earthly eyes should not be able to penetrate eternity. Our virtue on earth is thereby rendered so much the more pure and unselfish, because, ignorant as to what is to follow, we are thrown entirely upon ourselves.

But suppose a revelation of the future world should be made to us, should we be able to comprehend it? How is it possible that, bound in the fetters of earth as we are, and with faculties proportionately limited, we should have the power of comprehending the supernatural? How can the sensual embrace the spiritual? All descriptions would be insufficient to enlighten us, because we lack means of comparison.

If a traveler from our part of the globe visited the savages of the Pacific, and attempted to describe to them the comforts of life and the mental superiority enjoyed by man in our regions, how would he make himself understood, as no conception of the kind exists in the mind of the savage? If a man blessed with sight were to describe to a man born blind the beauties of a landscape, the sublime forms of the lofty mountains at the foot of which roll majestic streams, and around whose summits are gathered clouds glowing in the golden rays of the setting sun, in what words would he represent to the blind man, who knows not what light is, the wonderful beauties of creation? The blind man would remain, as before, in darkness, without the power of comprehending what the other attempted to convey to him; but greater sadness would take possession of him at the thought that he was excluded from so much happiness that fell to the share of others.

Well, then, what are we mortals more than persons born blind as regards the glories of the future exist-

ence that awaits us? Those glories can only be seen by earth-freed spirits, and were one of these to appear to us, and to describe the greatness, the goodness, the majesty of the Creator, as they are manifested in those blessed realms, and the condition of the souls that have thrown off the bonds of flesh, should we be able to comprehend what he told us? Should we not be overwhelmed with sadness at the thought that other creatures of God were so infinitely more perfect and more blessed than we? Should we not think the joys which God has bestowed upon us here below very insignificant in comparison with those He has in store for us? Oh, let us rest assured that it was with a wise hand that the Eternal God veiled the glories of eternity from the eyes of those who, being here on earth, cannot yet be allowed to partake of them; for to behold them would but make us less happy than we are now, when the joys that we do feel are the greatest that we know.

Were we allowed to have a glimpse of the bliss of future worlds, our impatience to attain it would im-bitter our life upon earth. How soon and how easily may not the barriers of life be overleapt! How many thousand sufferers would not in moments of impatience, forgetful of their duties, determine to leave this world!

But it is God's will that we should work out our destination on earth, as far as it is to be fulfilled here; that we should not voluntarily and capriciously put an end to our earthly career, but that we should pursue it to its furthest goal.

Therefore, He placed as guardians before the closed gates of eternity, fear and anxious doubt, and the awful stillness of death, and impenetrable darkness.

These guardians drive back the human race, that it may pursue to the end its appointed path on earth.

In spite of all the discomforts of life, in spite of our impatient longing to be reunited with the friends who have gone before us to our eternal home, the terrors that surround the portals of eternity repel us, and we continue our earthly journey with calmer spirits.

Were it not for that darkness and terror, should we not be like wearied mariners, who, after a long voyage on the stormy seas, behold at a short distance the shores of their beloved country? They see the calm and secure haven, where wind and tempest no longer threaten destruction; they already discover the verdant trees and the peaceful cottages; their hearts yearn towards their homes; their eyes are suffused with tears of mingled joy and sadness at the long-missed sight. They tremble. Every minute before they reach the shore seems a year. Ah! they recognize already their wives, their brothers, their parents, their children, their beloved maidens waiting for them there. They see their arms opened to receive them, and hear from afar the longing cries of affection. What prevents them from flying at once into those arms, to weep out their joy on those bosoms, in which the heart beats so tenderly for them? "Oh home! Oh joy! which we have so long missed!" all exclaim. They forget the helm of the ship, the waves of the sea, the rocks, the surf around them; they forget the treasures which they have gathered together on the long and wearisome voyage, — they throw themselves into the sea, to reach the sooner the shores of their home.

Such would be the lot of mortals, did not the dark ocean separate them, for their own good, from their heavenly home.

But not forever, O my God ! does it separate me from the dearly beloved beings who are awaiting me there ! I shall one day behold these shores of my better fatherland ; I shall at length see them again, those loved ones, to whom my heart clings so tenderly ; and shall rest among them after the dangers and hardships that I have undergone on my voyage across the stormy waters of life.

Yes ; be comforted, O spirit ; God has prepared thy haven of rest ! God has kept a home open for thee, where thou wilt find with delight what thou hast lost here. Thou wilt not be alone ; thy loved ones are already awaiting thee. They beckon to thee with the palm of victory which thou art to fight for here below. Up, then, my soul, fight out the battle ! Raise thyself, through the aid of Jesus' Holy Word, in the Holy Spirit of Jesus to that perfection, through which alone thou canst become a denizen of that better land, a partaker of that more blissful eternity ! It is the Lord that cries to thee, " Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

A JOY IN THE HOUR OF DEATH.

I know, I know in whom I trust,
And bow me humbly in the dust,
My Saviour, God, and Lord, to Thee.
If from my sins I may be freed,
If I may hope thy help in need,
Oh, then must heaven my portion be!

And when my last sleep draweth near,
Then dare I, without doubt or fear,
To the beloved One look on high.
And none who knew me here, and loved,
Will e'er repent, or stand unmoved,
Beside the grave in which I lie.

(REV. xiv. 13.)

ONE thing after another fades and dies away :
herbs of the field, animals, and man. We come,
we look around us, and depart again from this world.
Whether we are to depart in the bloom of youth, or
in the fullness of years, — who can say ? And in the
end it is of little consequence, — for of what impor-
tance are a few days, a few years more or less ? That
which is past is as if it had never been. The dust of
the infant and the dust of the old man rest side by
side in the grave, and there is now no difference be-
tween them. Another generation moves above them,
which knows naught of them, makes no mention of
them, lives on, but is soon to be laid low by their
side.

We are all aware of this, and we dread the mo-
ment, but in vain. Whether it be on the field of

battle, or on the bed of sickness, or in the midst of our relatives, or in a lonely prison, it matters little ; it is sure to come.

To delude ourselves in regard to it, and never to look forward to that moment, is as senseless as it is to be ever tormenting ourselves with thoughts of death, and thus imbittering all enjoyment in life. But it is wise to keep in store, for that solemn and dreaded moment, a joy that will turn all bitterness to sweetness.

Many persons, it is true, do think of this, but they do not always make a good choice. They are frequently very one-sided in their selection of that which is to comfort them in the hour of dissolution.

There are many who toil anxiously their whole life through to amass money, in order that they may leave their children a respectable fortune, or at least a competence. That is undoubtedly very praiseworthy. It must certainly be a great comfort to them in their last hour, when parting from those dear ones, to think that they are provided for, though no one may be there to watch over them. That they are not quite forsaken, are not quite without means, will not be beggars, or be hustled about as troublesome beings ; that they are placed in a position to lead an independent and honorable life. Assuredly this is a great comfort. Yet it is but a poor joy. For the good or the evil fortune of our dear ones, after our death, does not rest solely on the money that we may leave them. Their future lot depends far more upon their skill, their knowledge, their virtues, and upon the friendship of their fellow-men, and the blessing of God. All the money in the world cannot make us happy, if our mental disposition be adverse. It is true, that

a moderate fortune will save our children from too great dependence on the favor and caprice of other men. But it is only he who has educated his children so as to render them happy and contented, independently of money, that can say that he leaves them true riches, which thieves cannot steal, and circumstances not impair, and moth not eat. Finally, if we can find no better comfort in the hour of the last parting from our loved ones, than that we leave them some pecuniary means wherewith to get on in the world, then we have done little indeed! Even the heathens do this! We have only fulfilled a most urgent duty, and gratified our own ambition.

Others store up for the hour of death a joy which they have been hard-hearted enough to deny themselves all their life long. We hear that persons who are dying have forgiven their enemies, and have been sincerely reconciled to them.

True, to be reconciled to enemies is a delight to the soul. And to desire to be so is a proof of a noble disposition, if we have given offense by our pride, our covetousness, or our irrepressible anger. But if we look closely at it, what is a reconciliation with our enemies on the bed of death? In fact, nothing more than a declaration that we wish to make peace with them now that we can no longer injure them. What would you think of the sincerity of the desire for reconciliation of a man who, when thrown into prison, promises peace and good-will, and asks your forgiveness for the past? And are not those who propose reconciliation on their death-bed in the same case? Are all those present whom we have in the course of life offended by word or by deed? Can our will to be reconciled to them make amends for the many

painful hours and days we have caused them by our quarrelsome and unamiable disposition? And are we sure they have forgiven us all our trespasses? Why hast thou postponed till the hour of death that which thou wert bound to do every day of thy life, and why makest thou peace then only, when thy enmity can no longer be dangerous? Dost thou think that the wish, forced upon thee by the fear in thy heart, is sufficient to stifle the sighs of those thou hast offended, so that they shall not rise up to heaven to witness against thee?

Of others, again, we hear that, when disposing of their property by will, they have not been forgetful of the poor, that they have bestowed benevolent gifts on almshouses, and on other useful public institutions; sometimes, that they have made special arrangements for restoring that which they have acquired by unrighteous means to the rightful owners. This is right. We ought not to depart from this world with the consciousness of having committed a wrong, without taking means to make all the amends in our power. And it is praiseworthy to think of the good of the commonwealth, also, in the disposition we may make of our fortunes after our death. Not only our children or our blood-relatives are our kindred, all the children of God, all those for whom Jesus died, are so likewise. However, the pleasure we feel in giving away that which death forbids us any longer to possess must be rather a sad one. Why, O miserly, ungenerous spirit, dost thou not give away in thy lifetime, and thus promote joy and happiness? Then that would have been a merit which in thy last hour ceases to be one. The poor widow mentioned in the Gospels, indigent as she was, brought her mite to the

treasury. But thou hast been saving that thou mightest increase thy goods, and thou hast only become generous now that the moment has arrived when thou canst no longer thyself enjoy thy riches. Thou, who hast spent thy fortune in splendid entertainments, in pomp and luxury, in tickling thy palate with high-priced delicacies, and hast only begun to think of clothing the naked and feeding the hungry since illness and the approach of death have deprived thee of the power of continuing thy life of revelry and self-indulgence, — what merit hast thou? Thou growest more abstemious because thy appetite fails thee, and thou givest away what thou canst no longer use. Verily thy virtue is not great; canst thou hope that it will suffice to sweeten the bitter cup of death?

It is a consolation in the hour of death to see one's self surrounded by friends and dear relatives, and to behold in their grief and tears a gratifying testimony of their affection and tender attachment. But does this suffice to take away all the bitterness of the last moment? Who is not saddened by the sight of death? It is impossible to witness without emotion the last sigh of even a perfect stranger. Can we then regard it as a merit in ourselves, as a proof of our inward worth, that those who have been accustomed to live with us for long years, with whom we have entertained relations of the closest intimacy, should weep at our death? Would it not be more gratifying to know in our last hour that those also with whom we have never, or at least but rarely, held personal intercourse, will grieve when they hear of our departure? That the whole community will lament and say, "We have lost an upright fellow-citizen, a supporter of the poor and afflicted, an active promoter of every

good undertaking, a pleasant companion, a philanthropist in the fullest sense of the word " ?

Truly, one of the greatest joys that can be ours at the moment of death is the consciousness that in quitting the world we leave behind us a memory respected by all who knew us ; while, on the other hand, there can be no greater pain than to have the conviction that many survive who wish that they had never known us, or had never been brought into closer connection with us.

That sweetest of comforts, that none who survived him regretted having known him, was enjoyed in death by Jesus Christ. He died the death of supreme self-sacrifice for the happiness of all souls ; He died the death of inexpressible love, even for the ungrateful, who still misjudged Him. He died, but even his persecutors admired Him ; even his judges declared, " We see no evil in Him." A deluded people, in a storm of wild passion, put Him to death, — but Jerusalem wept. After the lapse of a few days his enemies were seized with an avenging panic, and thousands who had turned away from Him again sought refuge with Him. Even to this day, after very nearly two thousand years, the race redeemed by Him grieves at the memory of his sufferings and his death. Verily, this is to die in God ! This is to be followed by the blessings of one's works long after death.

" Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors ; and their works do follow them." (Rev. xiv. 13.)

And this — yea, none but this — is the last earthly joy that every wise man and woman, every true Christian, ought to store up for the hour of death.

With such consciousness it is sweet to fall asleep. But what is meant by dying in the Lord? It means to die in the spirit and in the holiness of Jesus Christ. But what is meant by dying in Jesus? It means, to die, not merely believing in God and in Jesus (for the devils also believe and tremble), but to be one with Jesus. And how can we die in Jesus, if we have not lived in Jesus? What is meant by living in Jesus? It means to live and act in his faith, in his spirit, and according to his example; to live and to act as He would have lived, thought, and acted, had He been in our place.

Only he who has lived in the Lord can die in the Lord. Only he who dies in the Lord can be called blessed. He rests from his labors,—he rests, not from his pleasures, not from his endeavors after riches, honors, and admiration, or after pomp and splendor, but from his labors for the good and happiness of others. And he may be called blessed, for his works do follow him.

They follow him to the hour of his death, and the remembrance of them is then his last consolation. He departs joyfully, with the happy thought: Of all that survive me, there is not one who repents having known me, or having been brought into closer or more distant connection with me. I leave no one behind me who rejoices at my being removed from the ranks of the living, because my existence has been oppressive and hateful to him. No; I leave a circle of friends to not one of whom I have willfully done an injury, even though I may have done them no good. I have effected in my life as much as was in my power. I often asked myself, when about to act or speak, Would Jesus have acted, have thought, have

spoken thus, had He been in like circumstances? I have lived in the Lord, and therefore I die in the Lord. My Saviour lives, and I also shall live. Blessed is he who dies thus, for his works do follow him.

They follow him to the grave. Oh what funeral pomp can be compared to the remembrance of our virtues by those we leave behind us; to the tears of affection with which our friends dwell upon our goodness; to the respect with which our fellow-citizens cherish our memory; to the emotion with which even strangers exclaim, Truly this man may be called blessed in death, for his meritorious works follow him! yea, they follow him, and will be turned into blessings for his children and his children's children. His name, which lives in the remembrance of his fellow-citizens, is the best recommendation for the relatives he leaves behind him. The world is willing to reward a deceased father and mother by conferring benefits on their children. In these the parents are honored! Woe to him who has nothing to leave his beloved ones but money and money's worth! Riches vanish, but an honorable name, acquired through the possession of great virtues, is a sacred treasure, which neither the flames of war, nor the cunning of dissemblers, nor the injustice of the great, nor the violence of the ruthless, can destroy. When the mind of the dying can dwell complacently on this thought, they enjoy in death unutterable bliss; for they are conscious that "their works do follow them." They follow them into the better life beyond the grave. Far above the stars, and — let every sinner tremble at the thought, and every righteous man rejoice — above the stars dwells retributive justice. The God of

justice lives, and I shall live with Him. What I have done to the least of Jesus' brethren and mine, I have done to Him. God will requite me! The heart-felt thanks of the sufferers whom I have comforted will be echoed in heaven. The glistening tears of joy or emotion which a feeling heart sheds on hearing of good deeds done by me unostentatiously and disinterestedly, are reflected in heaven; the deep-felt but unobtrusive praise — unheard and unsought for by me on earth — with which my companions mention the philanthropic institutions, or other works of public utility, which I have founded, will be heard by me in heaven. Ah! what rapture must fill the heart of the dying man when he can say to himself, "Far from leaving behind me any one who is likely to curse my memory, I may confidently hope that many will remember me with affection"!

I shall one day die! this is beyond a doubt. But shall I, in the hour of death, feel that ineffable joy which sweetens the bitterness of parting? Ought I not to wish that it may be so? Is there anything I dread so much as the hour of dissolution? And why not, then, endeavor to lay up such store of gladness for it as may lie in my power? Ah, "Blessed are they who die in the Lord"!

How, if the next night were to be my last? or the next month? (Who knows when the hour may come when God shall call him from his works?) Should I, in that case, taste the last and sweetest of all earthly joys?

If I were doomed to die this instant, could I lay my head on my death-bed pillow with the consciousness that I leave no one behind me in the world who has reason to repent of having been connected with me in

any way? Is there no one who, by word, deed, or example, I have led into sin? No one who needs blush in secret when remembering me? Is there no one whom I have injured in the estimation of his fellow-citizens by envious gossip, by rash judgment, or by reckless sarcasm? Is there no one who is vexed when he hears my name, because I have maliciously injured his good repute through love of disparagement? Is there no one from whom I have unjustly taken, and perhaps still keep back, what was his by right? Who has perhaps failed to demand it of me, because I have so cunningly managed that he did not know who was his despoiler? Shall I leave to my heirs property so unrighteously acquired, and to which no blessing can attach? Is there no one whose life I have imbittered by my caprices, by my discontented, quarrelsome, domineering disposition? Is there no one who may one day lament that I have not attended more carefully to his education? Is there no one whom I have offended, and whose forgiveness I ought to seek? Is there no one who has injured me, and whom I still hate, or with whom I am still at variance?

I shall one day die! that is beyond a doubt. But shall I die in the Lord? Have I lived in the Lord? Ah! I must veil my face from Thee, O Searcher of hearts, O omniscient God, O most holy Avenger! For I feel, when examining myself, that I am not quite blameless. I have still to repair much evil that I have done. I have still to make amends for many things which it behooves me not to forget. I have not always lived in Thee, my Saviour, and therefore I could not now die joyfully in Thee. It would have been easy for me to confer some little pleasure on

each one of my acquaintances, and to render them some service had I availed myself of every favorable opportunity, and yet I have rarely done so. Alas! I may have frequently done the contrary. Ah! I hardly dare to think of it.

Yet, hear my promise, O omnipresent God! I will think of it; I will improve it, I will make reparation, I will redeem what I have neglected, I will live in Jesus, that I may one day, blessed in death, fall asleep in the Lord, with the consciousness that I leave no one behind me who has cause to regret having known me. I may therefore apply to myself also the heavenly words: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them!"

THOUGHTS AT THE GRAVES OF THOSE WE LOVE.

Vital spark of heavenly flame,
Quit, O quit this mortal frame:
Trembling, hoping, ling'ring, flying;
Oh the pain, the bliss of dying!
Cease, fond nature, cease thy strife,
And let me languish into life.

Hark! they whisper; angels say,
Sister spirit, come away.
What is this absorbs me quite?
Steals my senses, shuts my sight,
Drowns my spirit, draws my breath?
Tell me, my soul, can this be death?

The world recedes; it disappears!
Heaven opens on my eyes! my ears
With sounds seraphic ring:
Lend, lend your wings! I mount! I fly!
O Grave! where is thy victory?
O Death! where is thy sting?

(LUKE xxiii. 46.)

GLADLY do I turn my thoughts to you, O beloved ones, who have gone before me into a better world! O ye never-to-be-forgotten objects of my heart's devotion, my longing for you is so great, that it seems to lift me above the dust in which I still dwell! It is you who, with angel hands, as it were, bind closer the ties that unite the here and the here-after, who strew roses on the bed of death on which I shall one day be stretched, and who rob dissolution itself of all its terrors. To think of you, to hope for re-

union with you, is to add to my happiness here below, and is one of the sweetest duties of my heart's religion.

I know that in remote times, when the heathens saw the Christians praying at the graves of those they loved, and even in our day, when Christianity reminds its votaries of God and of eternity, the religion of Christ was, and is still called, a severe and saddening worship, incapable of inspiring cheerfulness, contentment, or joy in life; and that, in consequence, many have turned away from it. But these contempters of Christianity have not been sufficiently acquainted with it, or have judged it according to the dark views and melancholy dispositions of individual preachers, who loved to inspire their hearers with dread by the pictures which they drew of the terrors of the judgment, and the sufferings of the condemned, and by the idea which they gave of eternity. These men preached a Godhead as prone to anger, as inexorable, and as revengeful as themselves.

Nevertheless, the God of Christianity is the God of love and gladness, for He is the Father of the beings He has created. The religion of Jesus is a religion of love and joy, for it encourages innocent cheerfulness, moderate enjoyment of the gifts of the Father, and contentment with our lot; its object is perfection and happiness; and even death, so much dreaded by all creatures, the Christian religion disarms of its terrors, making it appear as an angel of love and joy, which comes not to destroy existence, but to lift it into a higher sphere. The infidel, the man who scoffs at Christianity, may tremble at death, but to the Christian sage it comes as a friendly messenger from God, and for this reason Christians are pleased

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at times to contemplate death. To them the thought is not fraught with melancholy, but with exquisite pleasure, because, by raising expectations of a higher bliss in the future it makes the present the more delightful. For joy is always purest and most lively when, instead of contemplating its melancholy end, we can look forward to its uninterrupted continuation. And such is the hope of the Christian.

Although on approaching the graves of our dear ones, or when communing in spirit with them, a feeling of sadness may steal over us, this sadness is not unhappiness, but a sweet uplifting of the soul by a rapturous yearning toward those that have gone before us. Know ye not that bliss can have its sadness and silent joy its tears? If ye will call this feeling pain, oh then it is a sweet pain, in which there is greater enjoyment than noisy mirth reveals. Know ye not that when a delicate and refined soul is most penetrated by joy it is most attuned to melancholy, and that this feeling in its turn is followed by serene composure and tranquil happiness?

When a father or a mother sinks down by the grave of a lost darling, or when the sight of the trifles which the dear departed one was fond of in life calls forth his memory in livelier colors; when a gentle and affectionate child treasures up, as a sacred relic after the death of father or mother, some object that has belonged to either; when husband or wife separated from the loved partner of life, and, cherishing the remembrance of their mutual love and their happy marriage, places great store upon some ring, or some letters traced by the dear hand as a token of the affection that united them in life, and a symbol of the indissoluble union of their souls; when lovers early

parted, or when friends, brothers, sisters, remember in solitude and retirement the dear ones they have lost ; when, with many a deep-drawn sigh, their lips whisper the cherished name ; when their tears falling on the grave bear witness to their undying affection, — is it pain and anguish which they experience, or a sad but heavenly satisfaction ? If no gratification is mixed up with these tears and sighs, why, then, do we mortals, who are so prone to shun everything that is painful, so often indulge in such sorrow ?

No, no ; there is nothing painful in the thought of you, O my departed ones ! Where there is true love there is also true happiness. Here in my imperfect state I still cling to you with unchanging devotion ; here in the dust I still remember you with unaltered affection. Ah ! and may I not hope that you, in your glorified state, though much more perfect than I am, still remember with affection my faithful, loving heart ? Would your happiness be heightened were you not allowed to love in return those that love you ? Would He, whose name is Love, who binds magnetically together distant worlds and stars, and who has bestowed affection as the sweetest of his gifts on all sentient beings under the sun ; would He have ordained it so, that the better life beyond the grave should commence with the annihilation of that true love which is the universal law of creation ? No, no ; faithful souls, in time and in eternity, commune lovingly with each other, and join hands above the grave. I have not forgotten you, and ye are cognizant of my love ; ye behold the tears, and hear the sighs with which my heart affectionately calls to you. Ye are aware of my undying tenderness, and ye re-

spond to it according to the sublime conditions of your higher existence.

Flow freely, tears of sadness; bleed again and again, old and deep wounds of my faithful heart! Ah! those who have departed from me were truly worthy of such homage. Ye are, as it were, the sacred and only offerings which I can now bring them. It is a sweet pleasure to me to think that they to whom these offerings are made see them and appreciate them. Flow, O tears! open again, O bleeding wounds of my heart! With the blood that gushes forth from these wounds vanishes gradually all that is most sensuous in me, and I cease to cling so tenaciously to the empty vanities of life. With this blood also flow out many of my worst passions which incline me to attach to the joys or sorrows of this life more value than they deserve. In thinking of the glorified spirits, my own spirit is purified, and calm contentment spreads through my heart. It is only where faith in God and immortality fail, and man in his blindness believes that with death all ends, that this contentment can never be felt, and that sorrow for lost loved ones assumes the form of dark despair. In those cases the tears of hopeless grief become a solemn accusation of cruelty against the Highest Being, and seem to declare that man is nobler and more full of love than the all-animating and all-uniting Deity who is enthroned above the stars.

It is folly indeed for the mourner, when thinking of the departed, to figure to himself only their earthly form, in all the loveliness with which it was invested in life, and then to contrast it with what it is, as it lies cold and inanimate in the grave, — to think of their former tender affection for him, which now finds

no voice; their former joyous disposition, and the delight they took in the things of this earth, which they have now lost forever, as though it were their bodies that had entertained this affection for him, as though it were their earthly ashes that had experienced these feelings of delight! Why, even in the animal, it is not that which it has drawn from the earth, it is not its flesh and blood that experience pleasure, but a something higher that dwells in it.

They who mourn over the dead because they are no longer able to enjoy those pleasures of life which were dear to them here below, may be likened to a child that mourns over the departure of a friend of maturer age, who has left him to hasten into the arms of affectionate parents, or of a loving bride, or to accept some post of honor. The child deplores that his friend can no longer take part in his sports, but in reality, instead of grieving for his absent friend, he is weeping over the abandoned toys that are laid aside as useless. Ought we to feel pity for that which is utterly dead, and which is incapable of suffering? But such is the state of the body, the mortal coil of the soul, the left-off garment of the departed friend.

Does it not sometimes happen in our sorrow, that, giving ourselves up to strange delusions and to mistaken pity, we lament over the fate of the body, the outward form, while we entirely forget the soul that animated it? For if we thought of the spirit, how could we weep over it as dead when we know that it lives?

Frequently, also, it is the commiseration we feel with the sufferings our beloved ones underwent in their last illness, or in the very hour of death, that

causes our tears to flow. In these cases our feelings seem more justifiable; yet, upon reflection, we shall find that here also we are deluded by our senses and our imagination. I cannot believe that death, *i. e.* the departure of the soul from the body, is in itself painful. At all events, it cannot be more so than the illness which causes death, and yet the most dangerous maladies are generally attended by the least suffering, however terrible they may be to witness. For how often has it not been asserted by those that have recovered from such illnesses, that when they were nearest death they suffered very little and were but partially conscious? We also know that in distressing complaints the patient grows more and more composed as the moment of dissolution draws nearer, and that, in many cases of slow disease or of decay of the vital powers from old age, death approaches so gently, that it seems in truth but a falling asleep. Consequently, we have a right to conclude that dying is in itself not painful (for if it were it would be so in every case), or at all events that it is not more so than the illness that precedes it, for otherwise death would not bring with it that increased composure, that painless stupor, which is so much like sleep. Now, if you do not weep and despairingly lament over those who have recovered from a severe illness because of the sufferings they endured in its course, why do you thus mourn for those whom the gentle hand of death has released from their sufferings? Were not the pain and the illness the same, whether the patient recovered or whether he died? Yes, say you; but the patient who recovers finds in the renewed joys of life compensation for his past sufferings! Ah! and the glorified soul of the departed,

does not that find far greater compensation in the higher sphere to which it is removed? Is God just to those who remain on earth, and unjust to all the other beings that people his universe,—unjust towards those whom He calls to himself with fatherly love, when their time on earth is completed? In like manner as Christ, when dying on the cross, lifted up his voice and cried, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!” so will I, on the receipt of intelligence of the dissolution of friends, or when standing by the death-bed of those I love, lift up my voice and cry, Father, into thy hands I commend their spirits! Thou art their God,—as here on earth, so also beyond the grave; Thou wert their God before they knew Thee; Thou didst love them before they loved Thee.

He who fears not death feels it not, nor does he experience the awe that takes possession of the living at the sight of it. Children who know naught of death die quietly without anticipating it. To them, it is but the end of their illness. They may possibly die in cramps and convulsions; but these are no more than a fearful play of the muscles, which, though painful for the bystanders to witness, is not felt by the dying child. For instance, what can be more distressing to behold than epileptic fits? Yet it is well known that persons who labor under this disease do not suffer, and, indeed, are hardly conscious of being subject to the fits, though while in them they utter groans as if in pain, and their features are fearfully distorted.

Only those that fear death feel it, or rather feel when it is drawing nigh. The uneasy conscience trembles at the thought of the judgment. The approach of death awakens in the heart the dark despair

of a too tardy remorse. There is something inexpressibly fearful in the thought of being unable — at the very moment when life and all its joys are about to fail us — to say, “ Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit ” !

Yet we should be mistaken were we always to attribute either the apparent nervous apprehension or the calm composure of the dying to the character of the life they have led in this world ; for experience teaches that the most lovable and innocent children frequently die under what seems great uneasiness ; while, on the contrary, the greatest sinners have breathed their last with unalterable outward composure. What we witness when standing at the bedside of the dying is, as a general rule, merely the effects of the malady on the body and its vital powers. What is going on in the spirit of him who is about to depart, while apparently sunk in a state of stupor, who shall say ? Those who have seen ruthless criminals led out to die by the hand of the executioner, in the full vigor of life, will know that such persons frequently meet their death with great apparent composure. But is it possible to believe that this outward calm is the consequence of inward peace ?

Even good and pious people are, in many cases, rendered uneasy at the thought of their dissolution, merely because they allow their imagination too much scope, and endeavor to picture to themselves what they will feel in their last moments. They shudder at the thought of having to exchange all that is dear and familiar to them on earth for the unknown and unfamiliar. But this anxiety would soon vanish, were they sufficiently acquainted with the wisdom of

God as it is revealed throughout the entire system of nature. They would then see that what they look upon as unknown is in reality quite familiar to them, and that what they so much dread ought rather to awaken feelings of pleasure. They would know that the new life they are to enter is only another and more glorious gift of their Heavenly Father than that which He bestows when He calls us into this earthly existence. Hast thou not full confidence in the providence of thy all-loving and all-seeing Father in heaven? Why, then, dost thou tremble? Does the child tremble at the thought of the Christmas gift it is to receive from its parents, though what this may be is quite unknown to it? The better lot that God has prepared for us is like a kind and fatherly gift, to which we ought to look forward with pleasure and joyful trust. When a human being enters as an infant into this life, which he has never seen or felt; when his loving mother presses him for the first time with a warm welcome to her bosom; when the father bends joyfully and tenderly over the new-comer and blesses him, does the child shrink back in fear from the unknown and the unfamiliar? How kindly, with how many tender caresses, is he not greeted by all? How gradually he becomes acquainted with the new things that surround him! Now picture to yourselves that man had, previously to his appearance on this earth, lived in another world and under far more perfect conditions; do you conceive that even in that case he would find the things of this life so very strange? And in the life to which death is the introduction, we may be assured, the welcome we shall meet with will not be less kind and loving than that with which we were received here; perhaps, indeed,

the former will far surpass the latter. For in yon life preparations have already been made for our happiness; there are dear ones there awaiting our coming.

Why should I doubt this, and doubt it merely because it is not known to me? Had not God made preparations for my reception on earth, and provision for my happiness here, before I was born? Who thought of me before I came? Who measured out my joys to me before I had a heart to feel them? Who meted out my sufferings before I knew what tears were? Was it not my eternal, all-loving Father? Well, and He who thought of me before I was, before I knew Him, — will He forget me now that *I am*? Will He forsake me now that I love Him in return, and have learnt to call Him Father? Will He leave me unprovided for now that I worship Him, and with wondering awe adore Him in his creation?

Ah, no! Father in heaven, Thou wilt not, Thou canst not do this! Thou canst not, Thou wilt not abandon the spirits whom Thou hast created, when they have but just attained the consciousness of thy existence and of their own! Thou wert their God before they existed; Thou art their God as long as they dwell in this world, and Thou wilt be their God when they enter into the higher existence which Thou hast prepared for them from the beginning of the world! With rapture, with a presentiment of unutterable joy, I think of the hereafter, where I shall find Thee, my God, and where I shall again meet all the dear ones whom Thou didst bestow on me here on earth! Ah! what a moment that will be, when I shall feel myself transferred to heaven! What bliss to be reunited

with all the loved ones whom Thou, O Father, hast bound to me by the ties of affection! With lips tremulous with joy, I shall one day utter the prayer, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Amen.

THE THOUGHT OF ETERNITY.

O hope of immortality,
Let all my soul be filled with thee, —
Teach me the ways of holiness,
And when I fail, sustain and bless.
O God-like gift, by God designed,
Thee do I ever bear in mind, —
Why should sad thoughts my heart oppress ?

And when to full perfection brought,
Then shall I see and know aright
God's mercy, passing human thought,
Rejoicing, shall I bless the sight.
From doubts which made me tremble here,
The shadowing veil shall disappear,
And all be glory and delight.

(1 TIM. vi. 12.)

PERHAPS there is not one of the many sacred subjects of reflection presented to the mind by the religion of Jesus Christ which so strongly rivets the attention as the doctrine and hope of the immortality of the soul. For the love of life, and the desire for its continuance, is deeply implanted in the human breast. However full of tribulation this earthly life may be, mortal man does not willingly yield it up. However loudly the pious hypocrite may proclaim this lovely world of God's to be a land of misery and a vale of tears, he does not the less desire to abide in it, and he recoils with a shudder from that death which he so often extols as his deliverer from the wretchedness of this life. Up to the moment when they breathe their last sigh the dying still hope to

live ; this hope often accompanies the criminal to the very steps of the scaffold, and solaces the condemned in his dark prison cell.

It is this love of life that inspires all mortals with a secret horror of death, which at the same time fills them with faith in the continued existence of their soul after the dissolution of the body. In this love, by which the wisdom of the Creator has bound us as with almost indissoluble ties to life here on earth, He has also revealed to our minds their sublime destination. All peoples, when once awakened from the stupor of mere animal life, embrace with ardor the idea of a life beyond the grave. All religions, even those of savage tribes, teach that the soul enters into a state of bliss, or appears before the judgment-seat, in a future life. But the Christian has a more confident hope than others. He has, in addition to the revelation of God through human reason, the revelation of God through his Son Jesus Christ. In like manner as Jesus conquered death, so shall we also conquer death, and change the perishable for the imperishable.

Even the most frivolous mind cannot laugh away the thought of eternity. Even the most lukewarm Christian, who lives in this world as though he were to dwell in it forever, cannot always escape from thoughts of the grave. Even the reprobate who, abandoned to his own passions, follies, and vices, exerts all his wits, and brings forth every possible argument, to disprove the existence of an avenging God in the universe, and to throw discredit on the belief in the immortality of that part of his own being that thinks and wills and works so wonderfully in the body, — even he is sometimes involuntarily, in the

midst of his dissipation, compelled to think of God and eternity. The thought forces itself upon him as an indestructible and eternal truth. He thinks and shudders. "The devils also believe and tremble!" says St. James (ii. 19).

There are three testimonies in favor of the truth that man was not created for this short life alone, and that he belongs not only to earth, but also to a higher existence, — the world of spirits, which no frivolity, no wit, no power of argument, can destroy. And these testimonies, which are found among all nations of the world, are: the universal belief in a God, the universal presence of a conscience, or an inward judge in a man, and the universal faith in eternity. These intuitive ideas are indeed the educators and the preservers of the human race.

In truth, what would the world be without these three great ideas? Where would be the power capable of curbing and taming man, in the frenzy of passion the most destructive of animals, were these three great ideas to vanish from the world? Picture to yourself the human race, with its wild, all-consuming desires, left to itself, without faith in God, without the feeling of right and wrong, and without the conception of a continued existence after death. What safety would there be for life or property? Would an oath be respected? Would law have power to bind? Would an army inspire fear? Would innocence be held sacred? Would tears have power to move? No; all the horrors of hell would be perpetrated under the heavens. Violence, cunning, and cruelty would reign supreme. Assassination would precipitate ruler and subject alike into the grave. The earth would soon be converted into a depopu-

lated waste, similar to what it was before it was trodden by the foot of man.

If the thought of eternity can produce so powerful, so magical an effect, even on the savage, what influence must it not exercise over the Christian, who, having received the revelation of Jesus, and being admitted into his kingdom, has little to hope on earth, but everything to look forward to in eternity? What must it be to the Christian who can say with Christ, My kingdom is not of this world, and not on this earth is my home, but in the eternal dwelling-place of God, in the high heavens, in my Father's house?

And yet (who can deny it?) even in pious Christians the thought of death and of the state of the soul in the future life does not always awaken such feelings as might be expected. Sometimes it depresses the mind too much; sometimes it gives rise to an exaggerated contempt for this earthly existence; sometimes it degenerates into fruitless meditations upon, and inquiries into, the probable condition of the soul after death, and leads to all kinds of delusions; sometimes it embitters our best joys on earth.

Such ought not to be the effects of the thought of eternity. In what manner, then, ought my mind to be occupied with the subject? What effect ought it to produce upon me?

To every Christian the thought of eternity should be as an intimate friend, whose presence is not irksome, however frequently he may visit him, and whose unexpected reappearance, after long absence, would cause no surprise.

But if it is to be this, we must in reality first endeavor to make ourselves quite familiar with it. We must be intimately acquainted with it. We must

know what we have to fear or to hope from it. Only an intimate friend is received with a smiling welcome, whether he come often or come seldom.

It is the Christian's duty, therefore, to make the thought of the future life his constant companion, and never to repel it when it approaches. It will never be to him other than a reminder of the eternal, unalterable destination, to which each hour that passes, each step we take, draws us so much nearer.

Besides, we find the thought so frequently in our path, that to evade it is almost impossible. A fresh grave-mound in the churchyard, or a withered flower; the news of a battle in which thousands have fallen, or of the illness of an acquaintance; the walk we take to brace our exhausted system, or our nightly retiring to sleep; the house in which we live, and in which others have died; or the remembrance of parents, husband, or wife, children, sisters, and brothers, or friends who have gone before us,—all these must ever be leading to the thought of the mysterious future beyond the grave.

Well, then, as the thought cannot remain a stranger to us, let us make a familiar friend of it; let us endeavor to correct our ideas of eternity; let us endeavor clearly to define what it will be to us, and in what relation we stand to it.

Not that we ought to allow ourselves to indulge in useless speculations as to the nature of the future life, and the exact conditions to which our souls will there be subject. It is not necessary to do this in order to become familiar with the thought of eternity. Such inquiries can only end in making the wise man feel the limits beyond which humanity cannot reach, the bounds which his reason cannot overstep; while

the unwise will be led by them into mental delusions, into groundless suppositions, and be encouraged in visionary tendencies, which may be dangerous to the peace of weak minds, and which, in all cases, must exercise an injurious influence on thought and action, and also on physical health.

Millions of men have dwelt on the mysteries of the future life before thee, O mortal! without succeeding in solving them. For the veil which the hand of God has drawn before that future is impenetrable. And no ponderings of thine will enable thee to lift it until God calls thee. Desist, therefore, from senseless attempts to throw light upon the nature of the soul in eternity, upon its local habitation after leaving the body, upon its occupations in the other life. Heed not either the spoken or the written words of those who have woven for themselves a web of visionary delusions regarding these matters which are hidden from human ken; and who, in their foolish presumption, have sometimes even gone so far as to attempt to prove the correctness of their views from the Holy Scriptures. Alas! how can they hope to penetrate the mysteries of eternal life, whose weak mental sight does not even suffice to comprehend the wonderful things of this world, to fathom the mysterious laws of creation, which they behold in action before their eyes each day of their life! How dare they deem themselves wiser than the All-wise, who has, not without good reason, enveloped the future in this beneficent darkness! How dare they venture to measure their strength against the strength of the Lord, whose hand has drawn the curtains before the wonders of eternity!

To become familiar with the thought of eternity

means, to remind ourselves as often as an opportunity occurs, that we are born into everlasting life ; that God's inexhaustible fatherly love is infinite, like the existence of our souls ; that the hand which has already bestowed on us here on earth so many joys and exquisite gratifications will not be less generous of its gifts when we have rendered ourselves worthy and capable of still higher enjoyments ; that the mercy of the almighty and all-loving Creator, which has from the beginning of time ruled over the measureless universe, and which has also called our souls from nothingness into being, will continue so to rule through all eternity ; that if we have firm and unwavering faith in Him, any fate that may befall us, and thus also the change in death, must be for our good, but that we can only feel secure of a happier lot beyond the hour of death when we have fitted ourselves for it ; that the only way to make ourselves worthy of it is by growing in goodness during this life, according to the example of the Divine Jesus ; that as on earth our happiness increases with our growth in wisdom and virtue, so also will unutterable bliss be our reward in eternity ; that by neglecting our souls in this life, and only satisfying those instincts and desires which belong to the body, we condemn ourselves to imperfection and to a grievous and terrible fate after death ; that he who neglects his soul here on earth, were he even to gain the whole world, will be the poorest in the world of spirits, where only spiritual treasures, not earthly glories, have any value.

This is what the Holy Scriptures teach us. This is what Jesus, the Saviour, the Judge of the world, teaches, when He says, " And shall come forth : they that have done good unto the resurrection of life ;

and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.” (St. John v. 29.) “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” (1 Cor. xv. 58.)

If we join these considerations to the thought of eternity, it will never occur to us without recalling the necessity of improving our minds and dispositions. Each time our thoughts dwell upon the solemn future will come the question, “But have I done anything to merit a more glorious existence on the other side of the grave? Has my soul sanctified itself through Jesus, so that I may look forward joyfully to the lot that awaits me there?”

For to think of the eternal life hereafter, without at the same time determining to qualify ourselves for it, would be but self-delusion, dead faith. But when it stimulates us to goodness and noble action in this world, it is an angel that leads us on in the ways of Jesus, in the ways of the Lord; and as we progress in amendment and perfection, it will gradually become more and more to us a thought full of quiet satisfaction, of heavenly calm.

It will then never awaken in us without calling forth also thoughts of the beloved souls with whom we held intercourse on earth, and who have gone before us. We shall then never think of eternity without a rapturous thrill at the remembrance of some departed friend who died in youth, or of parents or children, or of a beloved spouse, or of sisters and brothers. Ah! will the highest, the infinite Love; will God who is love, — God, who united our souls so intimately here on earth, — will He part us yonder? Will He sever

souls whom He has created for each other, will He separate them in heaven, "where God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain"? (Rev. xxi. 4.)

The thought of eternity will never awaken in us without reminding us of our higher destination. We cannot meditate on our future existence without at the same time thinking of how fleeting and perishable is everything here below. We shall thus be led to contemplate with composure that which previously caused us poignant grief, and to feel more strongly than before that it is folly to give ourselves up to never-ending regret for things which were not given, but only lent to us. For all that we possess, earn, or enjoy on earth does not belong to us, but to the earth. We are only allowed temporary use thereof. Nothing but the increased perfection of the spirit, to reach which all that we have enjoyed on earth was lent us as a means, — nothing but this perfection, this innate nobility of the spirit, can save the spirit, because, as part and parcel of its being, it can never be separated from it, and because it belongs not to the minute points in time and space which we call life and earth, but to eternity.

But though the thought of eternity does and ought to awaken in us the consciousness of the nothingness of life, it ought not to render us indifferent to the beauties and attractions of our present existence. It ought not to fill us with melancholy and sadness, or with contempt of the world; but, on the contrary, to encourage us to a wise and cheerful enjoyment of the blessings that God in his goodness has bestowed upon us. Why, indeed, should we despise a life

which we have received from the hand of a loving Creator? Why should we condemn a world which God has created and adorned with countless wonders? Would it not be very blameworthy if the child, impatient to become wise and learned, were to disdain the school in which alone knowledge could be acquired? What inconsistency! you exclaim. But we fall into an equally striking inconsistency when we disdain or fear to enjoy the pleasures of this life, because of our expectations of still greater joys, which God will one day bestow.

O man! small, insignificant plant as thou art, put forth thy buds first, and develop thy leaves and branches, if thou wouldst in time stand forth a perfect tree.

Nay, the thought of eternity does not forbid our enjoying this world and all the good that it brings, but is, on the contrary, calculated to encourage such enjoyment. Instead of repelling us from this life, it ought to bind us closer to it. For here we are to prepare for the future; — here on earth, amid happiness and unhappiness, amid flowers and thorns, is the school in which we are to be formed for eternity. How deplorable is the cowardice or the insanity of the self-murderer, who, troubled by earthly cares, with presumptuous hand bursts asunder the bonds which bind him to this life, in the hope that he will meet a happier lot in the other world! Who appointed his lot here below? If he prepared it for himself by his own misdeeds, then how can he hope to be in the next existence a higher, better, more perfect being than he was in this? Or if God sent him misfortunes to try him, why does he withdraw from the guidance of his wise Creator and Father? Does

he think that his willfulness, his pusillanimity, will work a change in the eternal counsels of the All-wise? Does he think that he can escape from God and his divine guardianship?

In full reliance on the guiding hand of his Heavenly Father, and with unalterable faith in the immortality of the spirit, as it has been revealed to all men, the Christian will endeavor to apply to the elevation and purification of his soul whatever may befall him here on earth, — whether he gain for himself friends, honors, riches, or meet with hatred, poverty, and shame. He will love this earth as the school in which he is preparing to take his place in a higher rank. He will contemplate without fear the termination of life's journey.

“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written : Death is swallowed up in victory. O death ! where is thy sting ? O grave ! where is thy victory ? But, thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus ! ”

When once my spirit, freed from dust,
Shall to my Saviour whom I trust, —
To thee, my own Messiah, fly,
When once, O mother earth ! this shell,
In which the immortal soul doth dwell,
Within thy parent lap shall lie ;

What, then, is mine ? What bliss unbounded !
With what bright world am I surrounded ?
What am I ? say, what shall I be ?
What streams of rapture through me flow.
Is't I ? are these my limbs that glow ?
This God-like splendor, is't for me ?
I am transformed, released from dust, —
Whose throne is there ? Who calls me now ?
Ah ! it is God, in whom I trust, —
O my Messiah, it is Thou !

O Lord, thy truth, it faileth never.
For life renewed I thank Thee ever.

I shall not to thy judgment come, —
My foe subdued, in chains doth lie, —
Death 's swallowed up in victory.

And I, I rest not in the tomb.
Hail, Lord! All honor, might, are thine.
Saviour! from Thee my life doth spring!
The angelic choir I haste to join,
And loudest hallelujahs sing.

INTERPRETATIONS OF ETERNITY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

THE FUTURE LIFE.

A house of clay Thou buildest me,
Wherein my thoughts to treasure,
And with thy grace, my God, and Thee,
To fill my faltering measure ;
And as it better know thy ways,
To exercise my heart in praise,
And by thy Spirit led, to prove
A deeper, and yet deeper love.

Never to die, — Oh ne'er to die !
My heart shall scorn and doubt defy
To rob it of its glorious faith
In a new life, surviving death.
Say I should die, — unto thy side
Thou, God, wilt be my faithful guide ;
My soul triumphant sounds the strain, —
Death is not loss, but endless gain.

(JOHN xiv. 28.)

ORDINARY people are loath to think of death, and yet there are so many things that remind them of it ! They hear deceased persons spoken of, or meet a funeral procession, or learn that an acquaintance has been called away from this world, or their thoughts revert to persons they have loved, whose ashes are reposing in the earth ; and in each case there is that which must remind them that no exception to the general laws of nature can be made

in their favor. The man who never thinks of the hour of death without a shudder sleeps away as gently as he who has been longing for dissolution. And yet ordinary people are loath to think of death and the grave. This is very natural. Even were the innate love of life not so intense as it is in every mortal, it would not be surprising that he should recoil from thoughts of death, as they are opposed to everything that is most delightful in life. Death puts an end to our hopes, destroys our favorite plans and projects, cuts us off from our most cherished habits, and with unbending and irresistible power separates us from parents, children, and friends. Alas! it has already torn from us many of life's best jewels.

"And if this be so, why should we, by frequent thoughts of death and the grave, mar the few pleasures we have in life? Let us enjoy while we can, without foolishly embittering our own lot."

Thus say many. Nay, there are many who reproach the Christian religion with being gloomy and austere, because it is ever reminding its followers of the nothingness of life, and of death and judgment.

But, in truth, he who cannot think cheerfully of death has probably never thought cheerfully and rationally of life. To those to whom death is a mysterious, and therefore repugnant image, life itself can be little more than a confused riddle; for they cannot, as yet, have any clear conception of the purpose of their existence. The question as to our being or not being rational creatures does not so much depend upon what it is pleasant to us to think, as upon what we are by our nature *compelled* to think. But it is religion that solves the enigma of life, and thereby gives us the key to the mystery of death. So far is

true Christianity from depressing the spirits and rendering men morose, that, on the contrary, by the views of death which it inculcates it elevates its wise followers above every grief, and above every fear, and enables them to enjoy the manifold pleasures of life with imperturbable composure, whether their last hour be nigh at hand or far off. If the religion of Jesus in reality does this, what is there to find fault with? Why should we avoid thoughts which will, in spite of all our endeavors, force themselves upon us? There is not a human being who has not sustained some loss in the course of his life; how will he avoid being reminded of this? It is life itself, it is our hearts, that recall to us our painful losses; but it is religion that consoles us, and reconciles us to them, by the exalted views which it imparts of the divine universe and the divine mode of action.

Which of your dear ones do you already count among the dead? Perhaps a father, who was your guardian angel on earth? Perhaps a mother, who loved you above all others? Perhaps a brother, who walked by your side full of youthful hopes? Perhaps a sister, for whom you felt as if she were your second self? Or if you be father or mother, poor mourners, perhaps it is a child, the sweetest blossom and hope of your lives? Or is it a noble-minded husband, or a gentle, faithful, loving wife? Which of these cherished ones is it that you count among the departed? Whichever it may be, is the memory of this lost one not dear to you, since you shudder at the thought of death when it steals upon you in tranquil hours? Your heart bled at your painful loss, and the wound is not yet healed. Alas! there are wounds that never heal in this life. It is a mistake

to think that time cures all wounds. But for those that it cannot cure, the religion of Jesus Christ has a soothing balm.

It is possible that, in some quiet hour of enjoyment, the thought of death and corruption may suddenly fill you with a sensation of horror, and that every fibre of your body may, as it were, revolt against dissolution. Nay, so overwhelmed may you be by the terrible thought, that it may seem to you better that you should never have received life, than to be obliged to yield it up again. But these painful feelings are not caused by the melancholy views inspired by religion, but by your own innate love of life. Christianity, on the contrary, chases away all fear of death, by allowing us to cast a glance into a future beyond the grave, where life, activity, and joy prevail, as they do here.

Do you think that the Saviour, the Light of the world, came in vain to reassure us as to our immortality, and our ultimate destiny? And how does He describe death? He who had more terrible experience of its horrors than any mortal, doomed as He was to die in the full prime of his strength and years, in the possession of unimpaired health, with the consciousness of spotless innocence, and to die the death of a criminal? He called it *going in to the Father!*

And with Him every Christian says, with truth, to die is to go in to the Father, for Jesus' Father is also our Father. The Creator of the Seraphim, as of the lowliest zoöphyte, is also our Creator.

What a cheerful conception is not that of our departure from this earth as a going in to the Father!

We ought at all times to speak of our own and our

friends' demise in these terms ; then death, which the excited imagination of timid men has presented to us under the form of a hideous skeleton, would appear as a friendly spirit, come to help us across the boundaries of life, and to usher us into the Father's presence. In reality, many of the terrors with which death is invested, and of the false notions concerning it which prevail, originate in the erroneous and revolting designations which have been given to it. Thus sometimes it is called decay and corruption ; but we do not decay, nor are we given up to corruption. At other times, to die is to leave the world ; but we never leave the world, because this is in itself impossible. At other times, again, death is termed destruction ; but we cannot be destroyed. No ; to die is to go in to the Father ; our souls merely cast off their unsuitable garments to clothe themselves in worthier raiment.

The shudder caused by the images in which we speak of death is owing to their being borrowed from the condition of the soulless body, and their being consequently false. Every other false conception is in like manner repugnant to us, because of its being at variance with the laws of reason, while imagination endeavors in vain to make that which is unreasonable conceivable.

The condition of the corpse in the grave is not our condition, but merely that of the covering which we have cast off. When we cut our hair with a pair of scissors, is that which is taken off, and which is thrown away, part of ourselves ? Nay, how little does this separation affect us ! When the warrior loses a limb in battle, and sees it consigned to the earth, does he feel that the condition of this limb

forms part of his own state? Nay, the limb decays, but he feels it not. He still exists, and is conscious of being something quite distinct from that which is capable of corruption.

And what is our earthly coil to us? It is but the worn-out or damaged raiment of the immortal spirit. Why do we not shudder every day of our lives at the decay of our bodies, for, in truth, they do decay daily? According to the observations of profound thinkers and physicians, the body of a man undergoes a total change several times in the course of a moderately long life, so that as youths and maidens we no longer bear the same body, the same flesh and blood, as in childhood; and in old age again, the body is almost entirely a different one from that possessed in manhood. But we are not aware of these transformations because they take place through means of imperceptible, natural processes. Is it, then, reasonable to conclude that the final transformation, whereby we are entirely separated from the coarse earthly covering that invests us here, will be perceptible to ourselves? Has any one ever been able to observe, as regards himself, the gentle merging of the waking state into sleep? How many persons have not died with such full consciousness that death was approaching, that they have seemed narrowly to observe themselves during the wonderful transition. There are even instances of their having been able to prognosticate — we know not by what means — the precise moment of their dissolution, and their prognostications have been pretty exactly borne out by the event. But were any of these persons, who so calmly departed, ever known to show signs of pain or aversion while the gradual withdrawal of the soul from the

body was taking place? Indeed, even those who have departed amid sufferings caused by the disturbance of the inward functions of the body, ceased to experience pain when the sweet moment of the final disseverance drew nigh.

Away, then, with all repugnant images of death, borrowed from the empty, cast-off garment of the soul, which is resolved again into dust and ashes. This garment is not our real self. Our real self is immortal. All nature, as well as the revelations which we have received through Jesus, whom the Father sent, and who returned to the Father, teaches us this. Without this faith, — which is, indeed, more than faith, for it is a beautiful and deep-seated sentiment of the soul, a law of the spirit, — God would not be God, the world would be no world, reason would not be reason, and all our thinking and planning would be but the idle dreams of madness.

Before the early inhabitants of the world — then so much nearer the first days of creation than now — knew how to build cities, to manufacture weapons, and to weave clothes for themselves, they were already familiar with the idea of the existence of a supreme, almighty, and beneficent Being, and had the consciousness of their own immortality. And thousands and thousands of years will still pass over this terrestrial globe; every spot on its surface will be changed; where now are deserts, mighty cities may rise in their pride; and cities, in which kings and emperors are now enthroned in pomp and splendor, may be converted into deserts, in which hardly a ruin survives to tell of what has been. But the consciousness of their own immortality, and of the existence of God, is as little likely to change in the

generations of men, as the laws of nature, by which the universe is sustained, are likely to be destroyed. If there have at any time been mortals who have doubted, or who have even denied, the immortality of their own souls, such persons have always been looked upon as diseased in mind, or as making a false use of their mental powers by giving themselves up to insane speculations.

Some philosophers have attempted to demonstrate the inextinguishable belief of man in the continuance of his own existence, by words and arguments, in the same manner as self-created conceptions and calculations are demonstrated. But immortality is not a self-created conception, an idea invented by man, as it were, but a blooming forth, or a development of the thinking being; and we can as little prove it in words, as we can prove that we have the consciousness of our present existence. It is enough that we *are*, and that we have the consciousness of our being. Through this consciousness alone is every other idea rendered possible.

But, in reality, men are much less anxious to discover so-called proofs of their immortality (which are, after all, superfluous because of their intuitive belief in it) than they are to ascertain of what nature will be the existence of the spirit hereafter; what will be its fate and its feelings after the separation from the body; what may be that which we call eternity.

Human curiosity loves to hover round the mysteries of the future state of the soul, and many dreamy visions have been indulged in concerning life hereafter. This curiosity is natural and pardonable. It has its source in our innate love of life, and our con-

sciousness of immortality. But we ought never to forget, that as human creatures, who have but five very imperfect senses through means of which we can acquire knowledge of the universe, we occupy as yet a very low place in the infinite scale of beings; and that, therefore, it is as impossible for us to form a conception of what our spirit will be, and will know, when placed amid totally different circumstances, as it is for a man born blind to conceive what he would be, and would see, were a new sense — *i. e.* sight — to be vouchsafed to him, and all the influences of the universe were in consequence to rush in upon him through a hitherto unknown portal of the mind. We must not forget that just as impossible as it is for the human spirit, here on earth, to know itself and its essence, just as impossible is it that it should be able to know what, according to the nature of its essence, it will be when the dark veil is raised which covered it here on earth in the form of a body.

We have received revelations through Jesus, whom God sent to the human race, and the revelations are expressed in terms adapted to the powers of comprehension possessed by man. Without being a disembodied spirit already dwelling in eternity, it is impossible to form correct conceptions of that which lies beyond the hour of transformation. Jesus, however, spoke of death as *a going in to the Father, a union with the Deity*. He gave us the assurance of meeting again in eternity. He promised to the more perfect spirits unutterable bliss, and to sinners stern and just retribution.

Ah! this must suffice for us; it is enough to know God's omnipotence and almighty love on earth, and in this to feel full assurance as to the future, and even

heavenly rapture. For this love, so almighty already here on earth, and so clearly manifested each day that passes over us; this love revealed to us by Jesus, and also by nature, will it cease when the breath and the blood in our bodies cease their action? Would that be a love worthy of the Eternal Being, the Universal Father, towards his creatures, which should be discontinued after the lapse of a few brief moments? No; God, whom I am forced to conceive as Infinite Perfection, whom I worship as such in the smallest as in the greatest of his creations, — God is as undeniably an eternal, loving, watchful Father, ever bestowing happiness on his children, as He is in himself eternal, and as I am a creation of his love; and in our Father's house there are many mansions.

But to what He has called me, whither He will one day transport me, what I shall then be, — that I shall never fathom here on earth. But in like manner as we perceive (I can hardly say understand) here on earth already the majesty of the loving and almighty One in his wonderful works, so also we can form a vague conception of the future in the present. In the universe, as we perceive it now, we see a reflection of the glory of which we shall once be partakers. In time, we find indications of eternity. The more we study the creations of the Father of the universe as they appear to us on this side the grave, the greater number of signs of eternity do we discover, the greater number of foreshadowings of what the creations of the Lord after death may be.

He who knows God can feel no alarm at the thought of the hour of departure from this earthly existence. And the more we convince ourselves, through the study of his works, of the wisdom, the power, and

the love of the Father, — how imperishable, how conformable to their end, how perfectly organized, are all his creations, — the more inwardly assured we shall feel that his unalterable wisdom, power, and love, diffused throughout the immeasurable universe, will at all times and in all places encompass our spirits, and that wherever they be, they will be of his blessed kingdom.

He who knows the world, the illimitable, eternal world, does not feel alarm at the departure from this earth, which is but as a grain of sand when compared to the infinite universe. But he has but a very feeble conception of the greatness of God who believes this earth which we inhabit to be the centre of his glorious creation, round which revolve all the suns and the planets of the universe. Alas! the observations of astronomers make it more than probable, that we and our earth, far from being in the centre of the universe, are placed in the outer circle of innumerable world-systems; and that hence it is, that whereas the rest of creation appears to us in all its sublime regularity and order, the starry heavens, on the contrary, present to our eyes an appearance of confusion, — the innumerable worlds, that beam upon us as distant stars, being thinly scattered over the expanse in one direction, and in another densely crowded together. If the star which we inhabit occupied a more elevated or a more depressed position in the choir of glorious spheres, the spectacle presented by the star-bespangled heavens would probably exhibit to our eyes the same wonderful regularity and order that strike us in the rest of creation. Thus, to a person placed in an unfavorable position on the outside of a regularly planted grove, the trees may seem placed without any attention to order or system, and may appear to him

to form a confused labyrinth; whereas, if placed in the centre, or any other favorable point of observation, he will instantly perceive the beautiful regularity of the plantations.

He who has any knowledge of the universe, knows that in the great totality of things there is not an atom that does not endure forever, — that the whole is but a wide-spread realm of the most manifold forces. These forces endure, though the phenomena under which they present themselves change. The human spirit is a force in this sense. Its effects, *i. e.* its thoughts, its wishes, its utterances, change and are perishable; but the spirit itself does not perish with the words it utters. Light is not diminished by the rays emitted by it. It is said that flowers are evanescent, and they are so, because they are but phenomena of eternally present original forces. But though the flowers vanish, the forces, which represent their elementary principle, do not cease to exist in the universe.

And there is one great all-pervading law which I recognize in the universe of God. It is this: *Everything is resolved into elements similar to itself.* Water sends up vapors which gather into clouds in the skies; and these fall again as dew and rain, and again form bodies of water. Flowers, animals, the human body, all these having sprung from the earth, and having been nourished with earthly substances, in time return to earth.

Now, just as the unconscious forces or substances, after going through a variety of combinations, return to their original families, so will the self-conscious forces, the rational beings, the spirits who conceive God, return again to their original spiritual family. According to the all-pervading law of God in nature,

my body will in death return to earth, but my spirit will soar up to its original home. Is not this universal law of nature a sign from eternity? Have I understood it correctly? Have I understood rightly what Thou didst mean, O Jesus, my Divine Enlightener, when speaking to thy beloved disciples of thy approaching death, and endeavoring to prepare them for the heavy trial, Thou saidst: "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice that I have said I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I!"

Oh, when my time comes, and the angel of peace from the better world, whom we call death, kisses me and bears me away from earth, then do not weep, O my beloved ones! for I also shall then have gone in to my Father! Weep not for my cast-off earthly coil, for I also shall have rejoined my original family in my true home, in the beautiful world of blessed, self-conscious spirits. I shall have gone home to the beloved ones, the eternally beloved, the never-forgotten ones, whom I had lost here below, and for whom I so often pined. Weep not, for ye have no reason to weep, as little as I had to grieve for those who went in to glory before me. Yonder are all those to whom my heart cleaved, the costliest jewels of my life; yonder are those to whom the Father bound me by ties of unalterable love; yonder is Jesus, and yonder is God, to whom I come through Jesus! Weep not! to you also will come the happy moment when you shall go in to the Father! Round the lips of your corpse also will hover, to the consolation of those you leave behind, the smile of joyful trust with which you have hastened into the better world! Not here, but yonder, is our home, our true life! Blessed are you and I, for there is no death, only a going in to the Father!

INTERPRETATIONS OF ETERNITY.

SECOND MEDITATION.

GOING IN TO THE FATHER.

Father, my heart exults itself in this :
That Thou hast not created me for naught !
Such happiness is mine, — with so much bliss
Even this transient dream of life is fraught, —
How little is it that mine eyes can see
Here, O my God ! or understand of Thee,
Yet e'en that little is great joy to me.

My life may vanish from this earthly sphere
More swiftly than an idle dream of night ;
I know I am immortal, and that *there*
Mine eyes shall ope more clearly to the light.
Thee shall I see, my Father, as Thou art ;
And there my joy, which now is but in part,
Endless and perfected, shall fill my heart.

(MATTHEW xxii. 29, 30.)

THE consciousness of the immortality of the soul dates from the beginning of the human race. Therefore this conviction is found to exist even among the most savage tribes in the most distant countries, whither no ray of revealed religion, or of Western or Eastern enlightenment, has ever penetrated. Thus, from the beginning of creation, there has been but *one* voice, *one* hope, *one* aspiration in regard to eternity. And it was the Deity himself who, in creating self-conscious spirits, implanted in them this intuitive faith. Now the infinite perfection of God cannot im-

part delusions. And why should it impart delusions, when it holds in its hand the unbounded realm of realities?

But though perfect agreement exist throughout the human race as to the belief that the higher, self-conscious power that animates the body does not cease to exist when the animal or corporeal life becomes extinct, the notions formed by the nations of the world as to the nature of the future life vary much. For these notions naturally differ according to the degree of mental development, and the amount of experience and of knowledge of God's works possessed by men at various periods and in different parts of the globe. Thus, for instance, in early times, before voyages round the world and scientific observation had proved that our earth is a globe, floating freely in space, and revolving daily on its own axis, and yearly round the sun, it was believed that the dwelling-place of the condemned souls was situated under the earth, and that there they were tortured by means of the flames which were sometimes seen to issue from volcanoes. In the present day every child in our schools knows that our earth is surrounded on all sides by the heavens, and that it is only one of the smaller bodies which move in regular orbits through infinite space. Before men were enabled by means of the telescope to determine the magnitudes, distances, and orbits of the stars nearest to our globe, all the celestial lights were believed to be equally distant from us, and beyond these were located the abodes of the blessed, where they were supposed to revel in joys and occupations as sensual as those on earth. In the present day, every child at school also knows that each star is a world, and that the universe is an infinity of worlds.

Every people and every religious sect have thus had notions of their own as to the abodes of the blessed and of the lost spirits, just as at all times the child and the sage entertain very different views of one and the same object.

When Jesus Christ first appeared among the Jewish people and began to teach, He found the professors of the Mosaic religion divided into several sects. For instance, the Essenes, who led a very strict and secluded life, and ascribed the greatest importance to pious actions and abstinence from all sensual gratifications; the Pharisees, who, on the contrary, placed great value on outward religious ceremonies, and exacted the most rigid observance of the doctrines and rules laid down by Moses, or handed down by tradition, and who were held in highest estimation among the people; and the Sadducees, who rejected all oral tradition, and denied many of the doctrines taught by the Pharisees, among others, that of the resurrection of the dead. One day, when conversing with Jesus, the Sadducees, either with a view to satisfy their own doubts, or in the hope of confounding Him, supposed certain earthly and social relations to be carried over into the future life, and then put questions regarding them, and expressed the misgivings of their minds on the subject. If a woman marry seven men in this life, whose wife shall she be in eternity? asked they. Jesus answered and said unto them, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." (Matt. xxii. 29, 30.)

Similar to these doubts of the Sadducees are the strange reasons which people deduce from every-day

life, and with which they disturb their own minds in regard to the condition of the soul after death. The hand, which can feel, but cannot hear, might be inclined to deny the rolling of the thunder, because it could not form a conception of it; yet the ear hears the thunder, and knows that it exists.

Thus many persons ask, Shall we retain consciousness and memory when we change our body? For if not, though our spirit may continue to exist, this continued existence, without consciousness or memory of the past, will be tantamount to a life as new as if it were then for the first time introduced into the world, and death must in consequence be looked upon as a kind of annihilation.

These doubts, like those of the Sadducees, arise out of the circumstances and events of this earthly life. Comparison is made between the state of the soul after death and its condition during sleep or syncope, when it is unconscious of, or does not remember, what has been done to the body. And this is sufficient to cause uneasiness.

O ye of little faith, let me repeat to you Jesus' words, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God"!

Can we, with any show of reason, make comparisons between things quite dissimilar, or even diametrically opposed to each other? Or between things, one of which we only know partially, and the other of which we know not at all? Between the spirit still held in earthly bonds and the self-dependent spirit emancipated from these? How the spirit acts on the body we know only in part; how it will appear when in the enjoyment of full freedom, and unfettered by the dust which now clings to it, we know not at all.

Sleep and syncope are therefore poor comparisons as regards the condition of the soul after its separation from the body. It is true we know nothing of what happens to us during sleep or syncope, and we remember naught of what has taken place. This is not, however, owing to the spirit having ceased to exist during the interval, but to the senses having become incapable of receiving outward impressions, and of providing for the thinking power. When we close our eyes, we do not see, but the spirit nevertheless continues its inward life and activity. When sleep or syncope close all the senses, so that no impressions can be conveyed through them, the spirit is not the less alive and active, although it knows naught of what is going on without, in the world of sense. What surprising and wonderful evidence of this is afforded by so-called sleep-walkers! Or has it not happened to all of us, at one time or another, to awaken out of a deep sleep without having any recollection whatsoever of having dreamt (although our souls must have been active during the interval), because the lively impressions received from without on awaking have thrown back the images of the dream into the shade, until suddenly they are recalled to our mind, and we become convinced that we have had ideas even in sleep?

Thus the soul of the dying man likewise continues to live and to be active; but as his senses are gradually closing, he also becomes unconscious of what is going on in the outer world. The spirit of the dying man does not perceive death, because its own life continues as before. It knows naught of the bed of death, of the sorrowing relatives who stand around it, for impressions from the outer world no longer come

to it through the extinguished senses. But when the condition begins, in which, separated from the dust, from flesh and blood and nerves, it lives in its self-dependent purity, — then all points of comparison fail us. The force continues its activity, conscious of its being, and God indicates to it the new path it has to follow. The past and the present must be one to the glorified soul, — for it saw not death, it remained as before, a self-conscious power. It enters into new combinations. It goes in to the Father. Its lot is, as the revealed word tells us, — Glorification.

“Ye know not the power of God,” said Jesus to the skeptical Sadducees. What mortal, indeed, knows the majesty, the boundless nature of this power of God, which is everywhere present in the infinite universe? But so much do we know, that whatever God has ordained in his kingdom is sublime, magnificent, wonderful, bliss-inspiring, and wise, — in that realm there is nothing petty, nothing defective, nothing superfluous, nothing ignoble! And surely the entrance of the soul into the state of original purity, and emancipation from the fetters of earth, will not be less solemn than is, here below even, every impression received of the glory of the Father of the universe.

The emancipation of the soul from its frail earthly shell is the triumph of the spiritual power over the dead forces of nature. No fine-spun arguments and interpretations will help us here: before the power of God our boldest fancies fail, and the most extensive knowledge seeks in vain the limits of his infinite might. Any picture we may form to ourselves of the state of the emancipated and glorified soul cannot be otherwise than mean, foolish, derogatory, for it must be borrowed from things that are as little comparable

to the glory of the heavens as a drop of dew is to the wondrous ocean.

Ye know not the power of God ; ye know not what career it has opened to the emancipated soul ; ye know not in what new raiment this soul may possibly be veiled when it hastens towards Him, towards the Father ; ye know not what new views of the universe may burst upon it at the moment of the great change in its condition. In like manner as a world inhabited exclusively by persons born blind would have no language to express the varied beauties of color and form, the brightness of the heavens, or the blue tints of distance, so do we lack the faculty to comprehend, and the means to describe, the phenomena of the future life. Indeed, our language and imagery in a great measure contribute to obscure that which might be clear to us even here on earth, and give us confused notions of that which is in itself perfectly simple. Thus the expressions "eternity" and "beyond the grave" are misunderstood by many. People frequently picture to themselves, in connection with these terms, something quite separate from our time, and existing entirely by itself ; something that is, as it were, to come. But eternity does not only belong to the future, it is already here. We are all living in eternity, for we live in God, and God is eternal. The short dream of our terrestrial life, this short section of eternal being, we call *time*. Time is, however, comprised in eternity, just as our globe is comprised in the infinite heavens. Earth and heaven, time and eternity, are one. We are already living in our Father's house here on earth ; but we have not reached the higher grades of perfection, and are not yet there where the glory of God can appear to us in full efful-

gence. Thither we must be conducted by the angel of the better world, whom we call death.

We live, but our beloved ones who have died also live; we stand weeping on this globe floating in infinite space, but our glorified dear ones are, like ourselves, in God's world; we are here, — but they are perhaps in an infinitely more beautiful world; we are limited by our bodies, — they probably enjoy greater freedom and bliss. Now what is it to die? It is generally said to be a passing into eternity; but here already we are dwelling in eternity. It is a transition from the finite earthly relations into a higher, more blissful, to us incomprehensible, state; it is a change into a new mansion of the Father of all; it is the exchange from a place in a cradle into a place on the bosom of the Father. How differently does death now appear to us! It is not annihilation, but completion; not cessation, but continuation. The loved ones whose loss I lament are still in existence; they are living with me at this very time; they are, like myself, dwelling in the great paternal mansion of God; they still belong to me as I to them. We are not separated. No time lies between us; for I, like they, dwell in eternity, rest in the arms of God. As they are ever in my thoughts, so, perhaps, am I in theirs. As I mourn for their loss, perhaps they rejoice in anticipation of our reunion. What to me is still dark, they see clearly. Why do I grieve because I can no longer enjoy their society? During their life-time I was not discontented because I could not always have them around me. If a journey took them from me, I was not therefore unhappy. And why is it different now? They have gone on a journey. Whether they are living on earth in a far dis-

tant city, or in some higher world in the infinite universe of God, what difference is there? Are we not still in the same house of the Father, like loving brothers who inhabit separate rooms? Have we therefore ceased to be brothers?

Ah, let us not weep for the dead; their blessed spirits can experience no pain. Perhaps they, being more exalted, more perfect than we, and possessing a clearer knowledge of the fatherly love of God, only feel a kind of tender compassion for our ignorance. Perhaps they were unwilling to die, but were torn from our arms against their desire. God willed it, and the change took place. In their glorified state, they bless the Fatherly Hand that guided them into the higher world, and the love which knew better than they did what was conducive to their happiness. Perhaps the past seems to them as a dream, the recollection of which was hardly worth retaining. The soul, the self-conscious element in the human body, may possibly, when parting from the unconscious earthly elements of that body, retain a remembrance of the past. We know too little of the nature of the spirit to deny this, but perhaps the recollections of its earthly existence are its most insignificant possessions. Here, on earth even, the present is of far more importance to us than our recollections of the past. Much of what we have experienced seems to us hardly worthy of a place in the memory, and we forget it. Many of our experiences, indeed, we would be glad to obliterate from our minds. The present moment is always the one most fraught with enjoyment, yet we are ever striving towards the future. Can we suppose it to be otherwise with the blessed spirits? Perhaps the memory of their former imperfect state

would be humiliating and painful to them amid the lustre of their more perfect condition. If we, who are living at this moment upon the earth, had existed previously somewhere in the great universe, but in a very inferior condition, suppose in that of an animal; would not the memory of this our animal condition be humiliating and repugnant to us after having attained the *status* of human beings? Would we regret having lost all knowledge of our former degraded state? And may not the condition of the higher beings be, in comparison to that of man, what ours is in comparison to that of the animals? One remembrance, however, there is, which remains dear to us mortals even at the most advanced age, — that is, the remembrance of friends and persons to whom we have been devotedly attached. The old man still recollects with delight the companion of his youth, the friend with whom he passed many a happy hour. He may forget everything else, but objects of his affection he does not forget.

Love is one of the attributes which in some degree assimilate mortals to the more perfect beings; and this attribute can never be lost, for it belongs to the nature of the spirit. God also loves, but in a far higher sense than we. The entire creation bears witness to this. It is true that the sexual instinct and habit seem to engender some feeling like love in animals also; but in them it is but transitory, — it is a shadow that deludes us. But God, who loves infinitely more deeply and more purely than man, — God, who has diffused the sentiment of love throughout creation, from its highest degree of perfection down to its almost imperceptible appearance in the mutual attractions of the plants, — God who, through

love, has bound his creatures to each other and to himself, — would He destroy this love, this divine power in the glorified soul, at the very moment that He called it into a more perfect existence? No; *that which is Divine is eternal!* Imperfect man cannot be more perfect than the higher spirits who stand nearer to the Father than we; and though we mortals may lose the recollection of many things, our love for the objects of our affection we carry with us to the grave. In like manner, though a thousand memories may be lost with the mouldering dust of the body, the memory of God, the memory of the creatures of God whom we love, must accompany the soul into the blessed regions. God did not create spirits, and endow them with a knowledge of himself, in order to allow them to forget Him again after a brief space. He did not unite souls by the spiritual bonds of love, to separate them again forever. That which the most cruel human being would recoil from, God, who has stamped the impress of his love on every marvel of the creation, cannot will to do. And therefore the bond that united us in life, O my beloved! cannot have been dissevered by the death of the body. I still belong to you, though you are living in some other mansion in our Heavenly Father's house.

I shall continue to love you until my heart also ceases to beat. And you, — nay, you cannot have forgotten me, for God is the God of love, and I must still live in your memory, and in your holy state you must yearn for me! You who, dwelling in a higher world, see the greatness of God in all its wonderful sublimity, you now feel for me a more exalted love than I can feel for you. Alas! mine is still mingled with tears; yours knows only rapturous delight. I

lift my eyes with sadness to the stars, seeking the home in which your spirits dwell ; you look down with a happy smile upon this planet where I sojourn, lonely in the dust, and in secret breathe forth your names with many a sigh !

The mutual love of souls is eternal, like the souls themselves ; eternal, like God and his love. It is true, all earthly ties are dissolved between the living and the departed spirits, but our spiritual brotherhood in God continues, and God is the Father of all. In the better world we shall all be equal, as the angels and the higher powers and forces in the creation are equal.

That which belongs to the body, dies with the body. The spiritual alone endures. The power, the faculty of growing in perfection alone continues. Our relations must be of a different nature in heaven to what they were on earth, for they must be purified and spiritualized ; but how, we cannot imagine. The occupations of the blessed spirits in the next world we are equally incapable of conceiving. Most assuredly they are neither the same as on earth, nor similar to them ; and everything that has been said on the subject by presumptuous men is nothing more than idle dreams. We know not how the spirit works in a disembodied state, nor do we know how, when by the almighty power of God it is clothed in more beautiful raiment, it will act through this. For who knows the power of God ? But this much we do know, and a thrill of happiness passes through the longing soul at the thought ; the loved ones who died here on earth still live in a more exalted state. That which had once been present is still present in the universe, and that which has once lived, still lives. For “ God

is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Matt. xxii. 32.)

What ecstasy seizes me at this thought, the truth of which is so clear, so simple, but which only now beams upon me in all its fullness ! Where am I ? On this little planet, the earth, it is true ; but with it I float in the infinite universe, and in time eternal ! Where am I ? With Thee, O Father ! O God ! Even on this earth I am with Thee, and I behold Thee, through the veil of thy wondrous creation in like manner as my soul beholds itself through its earthly veil, the body. What a glory diffuses itself over all those earthly relations which Thou hast appointed for me ! The starry heavens become more sacred in my eyes, — I seem to behold up yonder the mansions of my beloved ones in the house of our Father. The spot on which I dwell on this little earth becomes more holy in my eyes, for it is the entrance to the better world ! My toiling and plodding, my cares and my efforts, all become sanctified in my eyes ; they are but the exercise of the faculties of the immortal power that dwells within me, and that are preparing it for a higher existence. One thing only is *unholy*, and that is sin, — the disobedience of the spirit to its own law, its disobedience to thy will, O most Holy One !

Away, all love, all impure passions, which would desecrate me here in the sanctuary of my Father !

Cheerfully I will look up to Thee, gladly I will resign myself to Thee, O Creator, abounding in love ! Oh joy ! to belong to thee, O wonderful eternity which Christ opened to me ! To belong to you, O blessed spirits of my ever-beloved ones, who are beckoning me to follow you into the Holy of Holies !

INTERPRETATIONS OF ETERNITY.

THIRD MEDITATION.

RETRIBUTION.

Stop, sinner, cast thy sins away!
Though vengeance, though the Avenger stay,
He comes to judge, He hath the power,
Shed for your guilt the sorrowing tear;
The day of wrath may soon appear,
Swift as a robber in the night.
Hark! even now the trumpets call, —
The stars already pass away, —
They sound, — they sound, — and, trembling, all
From forth their graves must rise to-day.

When through storm He makes his path,
Call ye the hills to shield from wrath;
“Cover us, hide us,” shall ye cry.
God comes to fill his judgment-seat,
The heavens shall bow beneath his feet,
The earth shall melt with fervent heat,
The universe in ruins lie.
Yet midst the wreck of worlds undone
The spirits of the just shall rise —
Their course fulfilled, their victory won,
And crowned with glory — to the skies.

(MATTHEW xxv. 31-46.)

IT is when people are deeply distressed and almost inconsolable at the death of some beloved object, that it is most usual to remind them of religion and Christianity. At such moments even those who have never previously in words expressed any interest in religion are supposed to entertain Christian feelings

and sentiments. And rarely does a sufferer revolt against the supposition. By this very appeal to his own inward religion and its consolations he is made religious. It is comforting to him to have a faith, or to profess one. In secret, most persons like to think of eternity, and of the state of their souls after death ; but they rarely speak of these subjects. However, when they do touch upon them, it is not without warmth and true feeling, yet less with the firm voice of conviction than in the questioning tone of curiosity. And those that mock at the idea do so with a certain reserve, as though not quite sure that they are right.

Many a man, though possessed of the same ineradicable consciousness of immortality as all other men, nevertheless likes, in conversation, to affect skepticism. Not, however, because he doubts in earnest ; but because, by raising objections, he hopes to elicit new proofs in favor of his conviction.

That uneasiness which some people feel at the thought of immortality and the future destiny of the soul, and which almost takes the form of doubt, is owing to their thinking that they must be able to give proofs of that which it is as useless as it is impossible to prove. It is impossible because most persons understand by proof a kind of sensual perception and demonstration of futurity which no one ever could pretend to. Even after death the thinking spirit can have no other test of its immortality than the consciousness that *it exists, and will continue to exist*, and the like consciousness it possesses in this life. But in this, as in the future life, this feeling or consciousness is matter of the immediate present ; the conviction is not derived from the future, for that

has no existence except in idea. When the future has been reached, it is no longer future, but present.

To demonstrate that which forms part of our self-consciousness is useless. *I exist!* Of what avail is it to prove it? I am conscious of it without any proof, and for this very reason it cannot be verified. For only because *I am*, is it possible that there can be any such thing as demonstration in the world, as far as I am concerned. *God is!* Of what avail to prove it? My consciousness tells me so, and millions of proofs, for or against, can as little destroy my consciousness of it as they can destroy the nature of my spirit or the existence of the world. *The immortality of the spirit is a fact.* Of what avail to prove it? This is not an acquired thought, not an opinion, the opposite of which might possibly be demonstrated. It is not a faith which we are at liberty to adopt or to reject, — no; it is an intuition, proceeding from the innermost depths of our spiritual nature, — it is a necessary part of our consciousness. I acknowledge that it is possible that in many human beings this consciousness has never been clearly developed. It may be that there have been people who neither knew of the existence of God nor of their own immortality, although both formed part of their consciousness. But there are likewise millions of human beings who do not know that they are in health, and yet the sensation of health dwells in them, and in all their members. A man is not ill because, when healthy, he reflects not on health. God and immortality are not blotted out because many human beings have not yet learnt to reflect on their own self-consciousness. Not until we are sick in body do we feel the value of

health ; and those that are sick in mind meditate most upon the possibility and the nature of a future existence. Instead, however, of being content with the simple and indestructible intuition, this unerring and immediate revelation of God to the human spirit, they seek a standard of measure among things sensuous, to aid them in forming a judgment of what the spirit may be when raised above all sensuous things. They endeavor to embrace the supersensuous with the limited faculty of their imagination, and to fathom the nature of the elementary forces of the universe with ideas borrowed from their varying earthly phenomena or effects.

Thus it is that men learn to doubt that which they have lost sight of by seeking for it in a false direction. Because they cannot bale out the ocean with the hollow of their hand, the ocean becomes to them a thing of doubtful existence. Hence it is that many persons conceive God to be a kind of artificially combined action of dead forces, without self-consciousness, without wisdom, will, or love ; and they are thus placed in the degrading necessity of assuming that the human spirit is nobler than God, because that at least possesses the attributes which they deny in him. Hence it is that many persons, though admitting the immortality of the soul, form a conception of this immortality that makes it nothing more than a kind of extinction ; for although they do not deny the eternal existence of the thinking power within them, they do not believe in its personality, nor in any connection between the present and the future. These deluded minds find in all, even the smallest things in the universe, the most admirable order and adaptation of means to ends ; but in regard to the highest and holi-

est things, they think that disorder and the absence of design are matters of course.

These views are no doubt very convenient in some respects ; for, as in accordance with them, there is no connection between this life and the future, those who hold them may live as is most agreeable to themselves, without a thought of anything further. Cause and effect they perceive on all sides in the universe ; but that the present noble or ignoble life of the soul may, as a cause, be followed by its consequences in the future state after death, they refuse to believe.

There are moments, however, when these views prove the reverse of convenient ; for instance, when the conscience in its natural might speaks in louder tones than the subtle arguments of the artificially misdirected intellects of the reasoners. Still more inconvenient do they become, when by the force of divinely ordained circumstances beloved friends or relatives are taken away from the skeptics, and nothing is left for them, while gazing gloomily into the eternal future, but to send up the cry of despair : “ Has the Creator of the world implanted affection in the heart of man in order to prepare a hell for it ? Did he unite souls in the tenderest of bonds, in order, when dissevering these by death, to lacerate every fibre of the loving heart ? ” This cannot be ! Does not all that is good in material nature continue forever ? why, then, should that which is good in spiritual nature die and become extinct ?

God and immortality are irrefragable truths ! The belief in retribution is a necessary result of this conviction, and it is one of the oldest beliefs entertained by the human race. It was embodied in the heathen religions of antiquity, as it is in those of the present

day. All religions teach, in accordance with the deep-seated intuitions of mankind, that there is a heaven and a hell, — an abode of bliss for the good, a place of punishment for evil-doers.

Without retribution, the immortality of the spirit loses all meaning, all value ; without immortality, the existence of the Deity loses all importance in our eyes. Belief in the one is founded in belief in the other ; the one cannot exist without the other, — they are indeed identical.

Jesus constantly alluded to retribution as a consequence of the justice of God. He referred his hearers from this life to its continuance after the death of the body, for the solution of all the mysteries and apparent contradictions met with here on earth. Who does not know the beautiful and striking parable of the rich man and Lazarus, which he narrated to his disciples to make clear to them the compensation in heaven which follows good or evil done or suffered in this world ? (Luke xvi. 19–31.) Or who does not remember the grand and terrible image in which he depicted the last judgment ; the stern Judge of the dead on his throne of glory, — before him the gathered nations, appearing as before a human tribunal, — accusation and defense, and finally judgment ? (Matt. xxv. 31–46.)

In these similes and parables the Divine Teacher revealed the future destiny of our souls, the inevitable consequences of our acts, our dispositions, and our sentiments, of our virtues, and our sins. In each he expressed the eternal truth : *Retribution awaits you !*

Even the world that now surrounds us is full of indications of eternity. “ We see now as through a

glass, darkly ; but then face to face." (1 Cor. xiii. 12.) And as I see in the dark glass of nature the majesty of God, I divine from the creations which surround the earth the order of the infinite universe ; as I apprehend from the constant presence and never-ceasing activity of the unconscious forces of nature, the indestructibility and everlasting existence of the higher powers ; as I behold in this momentary existence, called earthly life, but a point of eternity, and know myself and all those who have died before me to be living in this eternity, so also I perceive here below indications of a retribution which reigns throughout eternity, as it does on earth. As surely as the entire creation and our entire life is comprised in the eternal infinite, and as surely as the law of retribution will continue to reign on earth, after I have left it, as it does now ; so surely does it already reign over the spirits who dwell not on earth, so surely will it prevail in regard to those who die after me.

In nature, everything that is contrary to law is attended by evil consequences, whereas everything that is in accordance with law is attended with satisfactory consequences. Whatever takes place is followed by its effects, which, assuming ever new forms, continue in endless succession, each becoming in its turn a cause. However, we cannot always distinguish the consequences of one thing from those of another, for they cross and intersect each other. But whatever takes place to-day is a consequence of what took place yesterday, as this again is the product of previous days. Nothing can occur to-morrow the foundations of which have not been laid to-day or some previous day ; and what we call accident is only the result of some cause hidden beyond our ken in the great crowd

of events, — the consequence of circumstances which we may have overlooked, but which the Lord of the universe had freighted with their import. In this ever-flowing stream of cause and effect the sceptre of the great Rewarder and Avenger makes itself felt.

If we consider the most insignificant acts of human beings, we shall find that they are followed by their inevitable consequences in like manner as are the acts of nature. There is no difference. Imprudence, good sense, levity, all lead to good or to evil. And can we suppose that such should be the case in respect to natural events, and to every act of man or animal, and that the highest perfection to which the human spirit can attain should alone form an exception to this divine law? Should virtue, the perfected stature of the immortal soul, alone remain without any consequences in regard to the soul itself? Is it indifferent whether man, made in the Divine image, and endowed with free-will, grows in likeness to God, or in likeness to the brutes? Who can believe this, that knows the earnest lessons which life teaches? What man in his senses can believe it? Who can believe it, that seeks in Jesus the highest truth, and who revolts against the thought that perfect justice should not be one of the attributes of God, the all-perfect Being?

The law of retribution, or of cause and effect, prevails. It rules in regard to dead matter; why not in respect to that which is living? In the human body lives a sublime power which we call spirit, and which is endowed with consciousness, perception, and will. It is the nature of this power to strive for self-development, that is, to strive towards a perfection infinite as all spirit. It bears, furthermore, within itself the

eternal law, written by the hand of God, and purified from the overlying dust of sensuousness by Jesus Christ, our Saviour from sin. And according to this law is the striving for perfection regulated.

Can we suppose that the Creator implanted within us for no purpose this fundamental instinct of self-development? Or that the law that regulates this self-development is given for no purpose? Is it a matter of indifference 'whether we follow it, or whether we deviate from it, whether we grow in likeness to the brutes or in likeness to God?

And if, O man! (this be not a matter of indifference; if here also the general law of creation, the endless concatenation of cause and consequence obtains: canst thou believe that the spirit is perfected on earth, and that its perfection has only reference to the life on this little planet? How is it possible to believe in spiritual perfection on earth? Countless numbers have died early from unknown causes, others lose, as they grow old, the use of their worn-out senses, and hardly retain any power over the body, the tool of the soul. Does not this interruption of the onward course towards that perfection, which our inward instincts and all the laws of nature impel us to strive for, indicate that the work is to be continued in a future existence?

But suppose that the goal of perfection could in truth be reached here on earth; would it be of any avail in regard to this life? Nay, there are numbers of human beings that get very well through this life without virtue, by the aid of cunning and cleverness alone. Look at the beasts of the fields, they know naught of the higher aspirations of the spirit, and yet they live contentedly according to their nature. Ah,

it is but too true, the mere earthly life can be carried on without any strength of virtue, but not so the true existence of the soul. Therefore virtue does not exist for the sake of this world alone, — it is ever pointing to eternity.

Indeed, it not unfrequently occurs, that virtue and mere worldly or animal happiness are diametrically opposed to each other, — that virtue, which transports the spirit with joy, causes suffering to the body. Do you think the ennobled spirit will not receive compensation in the course of its eternal existence? It may happen, and it has happened, that human beings have by means of nefarious acts, which they could not think of without blushing, and which in their inmost hearts they abhorred, secured to themselves the most brilliant earthly advantages, such as honors, riches, rank, and power. Why, then, did they blush, and why did they in secret shudder at their own degradation? It may happen, and it has happened, that noble men have felt it their duty to shed their blood and to spend their fortunes in the cause of truth, or to sacrifice life itself for the good of their loved ones, or for the salvation of their country or their people? Why have they made these sacrifices? Why were they unwilling to live a life they deemed unworthy? Why is there something far more exquisite than the mere breath of life? Dost thou think that these sublime characters, with their hearts so full of excellence, have died in vain? Oh, if thou wert right in supposing this, then selfishness would be a virtue, madness reason, and the highest truth a lying contradiction. No; there is a God! And nature and eternity, in which we have our being, are the kingdom of God. And in the realm of the

All-Just, the law of retribution rules. The human spirit, which by its own will, and by rising above its animal nature, — above ambition, sensuality, envy, gluttony, the love of revenge, and other vicious tendencies, — attains to self-dependence, freedom, greatness, will be after death a more *perfect and mature power, a more divine creature*; and will have made many steps forward in the path that leads to the highest goal which the Eternal Being has marked out in the infinite distances of existence. This spirit will have attained to a higher perfection than millions of other beings, and *this is its heaven!*

And again, if a human creature, endowed with will, perceptions, and peculiar spiritual laws, nevertheless makes himself the slave of sensuality; is cunning, irate, ambitious, gluttonous, covetous, voluptuous, or, in other words, lowers himself to the level of an animal possessed of the mere germs of humanity, — this spiritual being who has unresistingly allowed the self-conscious power within him to be overcome by the blind forces of nature, will, after the death of the body, be an *immature, impaired, decrepit power*. It has prepared for itself the low position it will hold in the scale of beings, and in the rank of only half-conscious, animal souls. Millions of glorified spirits in the enjoyment of ineffable bliss hover above it. Its state is near to annihilation, and *this is its hell!*

Boast not of thy triumph over innocence, unprincipled seducer; the brutes also are voluptuous. Boast not of thy hoarded, useless treasures, covetous miser, insensible to the wants and tears of thousands of sufferers; the dog also watches greedily over its heap of bones. Boast not of thy cleverness and cunning, selfish villain; of how thou hast managed to con-

ceal thy malignant trickeries, and to thrust out of thy path those who obstructed it; of how thou art able to enjoy the fruits of thy frauds in security and peace; the thievish fox also excels in cunning. Unhappy men, ye must seek your equals among the animals, — among the glorified spirits you will not find them. Ye know not nobility of soul; can ye expect that there be for you a heaven of higher perfection? Ye have not sought for virtue; would ye ask for its reward? Ye do not admit that Jesus died for you; would ye lay claim to a share in the redemption wrought by Him? Ye have not acknowledged the Most Holy, and He will not acknowledge you. “Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these little ones, ye did it not unto me.” (Matt. xxv. 45.)

As the present day lays the foundation of the history of the morrow, *so does the life of the spirit on earth lay the foundation of its history in eternity.* Improvement and happiness are the objects of the better spirits here on earth; they are their destiny in the next world. It is vain curiosity and hopeless speculation to endeavor to know how and where this destiny will be fulfilled. Sensuous man can only comprehend the things of this earth; to grasp the things of other worlds his senses do not suffice. Or, is there any one who has measured the abounding wealth of God? It would be equally idle to speculate upon the local habitation and the mode of punishment of those spirits who have rendered themselves unworthy of a higher destiny and a better world. Jesus speaks of these matters, it is true, but only in parables, representing them under the semblance of human things. And when he compares the deplor-

able state of the sinner's soul with the agony caused to the human body by fire, the all-consuming element, he avails himself, with terrible purpose, of an image much in use at that day among the Jews.

Nature, reason, and revelation thus agree in showing that the death of the body can make no difference in the life of the soul ; that between the minute in which the last breath is drawn on the bed of sickness or on the field of battle, and the minute in which, in accordance with the eternal laws of the Creator, we enter, as emancipated, free, self-dependent spirits, into a new world, there must necessarily be a moral connection, such as that between cause and effect in the material world.

It is thus the soul's active power of virtue that raises it up to a higher destination ; and it is not the loving Deity that condemns us, but our own imperfection and sinfulness. The justice of God is tempered by love and mercy, and therefore the self-condemned may perhaps, after having been purified in the furnace of new and bitter trials, again be allowed to approach the all-good One. But the more perfect spirits will ever be in advance of them, for the consequences of the neglect of the soul on earth endure eternally.

Retribution is the law of thy kingdom, O Lord of the universe ! Father and judge of our spirits ! I also shall receive my reward and my punishment. The harvest I am to reap in eternity is sown here upon earth ! I shall die, — but not cease to exist. Why do I turn pale at the thought ? I shall die, — in a few years I shall be spoken of as one that has passed away ; a few years more, and I shall have been forgotten on earth, as millions have been forgotten before me. But Thou, O Father of spirits ! Thou hast

not forgotten these millions. They still belong to thy creation ; they still live ; they are thy children ; Thou guidest them to perfection through paths unknown to us, in like manner as on earth thou gavest them pain and pleasure to serve as their monitors.

I exist, and shall exist, while others are passing heedlessly over my grave. But Thou wilt not forget me. I am thy child, and shall be so even when I shall be freed from the earthy coil that now encompasses me. Thy child, perhaps thy unhappy child, lost through my own sinfulness ! Sold for earthly lust to the vengeance of sin ! Removed far from Thee, and from the bliss of the more perfect spirits, by my neglect of my own soul. Woe unto me, should I have debarred myself from saying when I die, that I am going in to the Father ! should my imperfection have raised an eternal barrier between me and my glorified beloved ones in the better world.

I tremble at the thought, that when all earthy joys fade in the hour of death, no hopes from the gardens of the heavenly paradise may spring up to cheer my spirit ! O Eternal Father, I also am thy child ! Banish me not from thy presence ! Love me, that I may be blessed ! Ah ! Thou desirest that I should be blessed, therefore Thou hast sent me so many warnings in life ; therefore, also, Thou didst send thy Son, that I might lay hold of the salvation he offered me. Why have I so long neglected doing so ? Is it not I alone that am to blame ? Alas ! have I not too often been the willing slave of my earthly lusts, of the passions which I have in common with the brutes ? Ah ! how little have I hitherto had in common with Jesus ! How can I, after a misspent life here, hope for communion with him hereafter ?

O Father, have mercy ! Nay, Thou never refusest mercy ; but do I ask for it with a contrite heart ? How many hours will my earthly career still last ? Through Jesus I will devote them to Thee, by endeavoring from this moment forward to purify and perfect my own soul. Amen.

INTERPRETATIONS OF ETERNITY.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

REUNION.

He gave it, He hath taken it away,
He who in grieving us no joy can take.
Patient of evil, He the righteous' stay
And comfort, unto Him my prayer I make, —
Is it not his, all, everything I have ?
Who, then, can have such right to all as He,
Who says, "Inclose thy prey," unto the grave;
"Bring forth," to mothers in their agony ?
Reverence is mute, but love in faith is blest.
God loves us, though he rob us of our best.

How can He rob us ? He may take again
What is his own; but is this robbery ?
My bitter flowing tears will I restrain;
He is almighty, — naught but dust am I;
Yet me He raises from my anguish sore
To his own world of deep, unfading bliss,
Where loving hearts shall meet again once more,
Who have been torn apart by death in this.
What God, the Faithful One who changeth never,
Has bound together, He will ne'er dis sever.

(LUKE xxiii, 43.)

BLEED freely, and bleed ever afresh, deep wounds
of my heart ! Welcome again and again, name-
less and holy sorrow which stirs my spirit at the
thought of the loved one who has left me. To the
living I can speak words of affection, I can devote
acts of friendship, I can express my love in tender

caresses ; but what can I give to the beloved dead, whose ashes repose in the grave ? To him I can offer no other tribute than the tears which I shed in remembering, — no signs of affection but my sighs. In my solitary walks, where his cherished image ever accompanies me, my hands are clasped in constantly renewed agony, my streaming eyes are turned silently towards heaven, and from my lips escapes the sigh : “ O my God ! my God ! why was I doomed to lose the loved one of my soul, the light of my days ? Alas ! why was he so early torn away from my heart ? He was happy ; why was he not left to enjoy still further happiness ? He was devoted to me with tender fidelity ; why was he not allowed to reap the reward thereof ? Fain would he have clung to life, — fain would he have lingered in pain and illness, could he but have remained among us. In vain ! The film of death spread over his eyes, and the soul, so full of love, departed from us. Ah ! how willingly would I have given my life to reknit again the bonds which bound him to life. But my prayers were unheard ! There was no mercy for me ! It was accomplished. The heart ceased to beat. In obedience to the call of the Almighty, the spirit of a new angel left us, — hastened along new paths into the regions of eternal glory.”

They try to comfort me, saying : “ Why dost thou weep, thy beloved is happy ? Wouldst thou, were it in thy power, deprive him of the bliss which the Eternal Father has vouchsafed to him ? He has won the victory ; thy grief is of no avail. Call not upon thy glorified loved one, he is happy ! ” — What feeble consolation ! He is happy, the angel who has fled from us ! I know he is happy, for I believe in God.

Did I not know this, I should despair ; I should curse my existence in a world so unmerciful, that it has only tears for virtue, only cruel separation for faithful, loving souls ; while for heartless vice it has pleasure, and for treacherous infidelity, satisfaction. He is happy, I know it, for I know God and his love. But I, — am I happy ? For that which the beloved departed spirit has lost he will find boundless compensation in a higher and better life. But what can make amends to me, in this world, for my heart-rending loss ? I have still friends, it is true ; but he is not among them. I may win new friends, but I shall never again press him to my lacerated heart. In vain I call his name ; in vain I pray ; in vain I stretch out my arms towards him. Others whom God has left me are dear to my heart ; but they cannot take the place of him I have lost. For in the love of souls one cannot take the place of another.

Therefore will I not only be faithful to my love through life, but also to my sorrow. It is the sweetest incense which widowed faith can offer on the altar of the dead. It will die with me, when in the last hour, the yearning aspirations of my heart shall at length be dissolved in the ecstasy of approaching reunion.

Why force such consolation upon me ? It will not give me back my lost one. My grief may, perhaps, in time become less poignant, but my love and my longing will remain the same, even though I should hide them from the world. Why, then, try to console me ?

Hast thou beheld thy father or thy mother in the narrow coffin, — hast thou seen the venerable head resting with closed eyes in the eternal sleep of death ?

Ah ! if so, with what tenderness didst thou not gaze for the last time upon the features of the countenance ; which had so often beamed upon thee with affection ; with what reverence didst thou not touch the stiffened hand, which guided thee so tenderly in youth, — which in infancy so willingly lifted thee over every thorn in thy path, — which had so often been raised to heaven in supplication for thee ! Hast thou beheld the corpse of thy child in its coffin ? Thy sweet child whom thou didst tend and watch through many anxious days and sorrowful nights ! But thy care proved vain. Thy hopes lay strewn like withered leaves over the lovely corpse. The joys which the future had promised died with thy darling. In his face, still lovely in death, thou didst read the tenderness with which his heart beat for thee before its throbbings were stilled. With stifled voice thou didst whisper the last, the eternal good-night ! You were separated. The heart of father or of mother had to tear itself from the child of its affections, and to resign itself to solitude.

Hast thou seen thy husband or thy wife stretched with pallid cheek on the funeral bier ? Thy heaven on earth, thy better half, laid low in death ? Then hast thou felt as though thou wert no longer thyself, as though the noble part of thyself had been taken away. Widow, or widower, didst thou not sob forth : “ Why, oh why have I been left behind ? Why cannot I follow thee into thy heaven ? ”

Hast thou seen brother, or sister, or friend, or beloved companion of thy childhood, laid low in death ? Hast thou seen the cherished remains borne away from thy home, and with them all the joys that had sprung from the happy relationship ? Thou stoodst

there like a tree struck by lightning, that has lost its leafy crown, and has been rent asunder in the prime of its strength.

Oh, how bitter is the pain of parting in death ! Is then affection a crime, that it must be so cruelly expiated ? Why did the Creator give us a heart receptive of love, and endow us with a wealth of tender feelings, if this heart and these feelings are not to be taken into account in this life ? Why was the treasured object bestowed upon me, and why was I allowed to bind myself to him by such tender bonds, if these were to be dissevered, and the pain thus rendered tenfold greater ? What had my beloved lost one been guilty of, that he should be doomed to suffer so intensely in his last moments ? Why should this angel, when drawing near to the hour of his glorification, be tortured with the pangs of disease ? Of what good was it to me to witness his patient suffering ? These are fearful, cruel enigmas, which I cannot solve ! But they render my grief more intense ; they increase my sense of misery to an unutterable degree. I see how wretched is the lot of man, I see that the mercy of the Eternal Father is no more. O my God, thy mercy ? Ah ! forgive, forgive the injustice which the despair of the moment inspired ! No, thy mercy never ceases ! Even on the bed of death thou wert the Father of the sufferer. Thou didst not inflict greater pain than he could bear, and his severest agonies Thou didst mercifully assuage by unconsciousness. He was perhaps less aware of his physical state than I supposed. My tender anxiety, my imagination filled with terrors, impressed me with exaggerated notions of the pangs which he endured. Perhaps I suffered even more than he, for what is the

anguish of the body compared with that of the soul? Great is my distress, O Father! But greater still my faith in thy wise guidance and in thy unbounded love. Thou, O Lord, didst give me my soul's beloved; and thou, O Lord, hast taken him away.

But why hast thou taken him away? Wherein had I offended? Was my love for him too great? Was I unworthy of my tranquil happiness? Can we love too much? Yes, Father, I acknowledge it; *we love too much when we cling so passionately to some object in this world, as though it were to belong to us forever.* Did I not know that here on earth human beings meet but for a little while? Did I not know that either he, the object of my affection, must leave this world before me, or I before him? The first time we grasp a new friend's hand, we ought to think of the parting pressure we may have to give to that same hand, and to remember that the hour of separation is ever nearer than we anticipate; this will prevent our friendship from becoming too ardent. When father and mother impress the first rapturous kiss on the soft cheek of the new-born babe, let them remember that this sweet plant of God is intrusted to their care for a few hours, a few weeks, or a few years, only. Then they will each day be prepared to give back the precious nursling when the Lord demands it. Woe to them if they deceive themselves, if their passionate fondness refuse to believe in the possibility of separation, and they mock at the warnings of reason! *Then the loss becomes a punishment, and the anguish so much the more poignant, because it is a consequence of their own want of reflection.*

Yes, Heavenly Father, I acknowledge how earnestly Thou dost ever admonish our souls not to give

themselves up with too great devotion even to the noblest pleasures here below. We are not to abide here. Our life on earth is to be but the beginning of our life in heaven. Here we are but to lay the foundations of the holy and beautiful things which are to be completed in the true home of our spirits. We must ever keep in mind that each good we may enjoy on earth is but a loan, not a possession; that nothing is our own but our virtue; and that everything is in thy power, O Father, not in ours. When we forget this, we begin also to forget our own destination; and we may then be thankful for some serious warning, that rouses us out of our dreams and delusions, and, as it were, calls out to us: "Here you cannot abide; here all is fleeting! think of elevating your minds by truth, of ennobling your souls by fulfilling the word of Jesus. The most virtuous is the most happy, only to the holy belongs the holiest, here and hereafter."

I will therefore try to be composed. I will listen to the voice of religion, to the voice of truth,—indeed, were I to refuse to listen to it, would I not have to expiate my immoderate passion by severer suffering? If my misfortune fail to make me wiser, should I not deserve to be awakened to a sense of my duty by still greater misfortunes? I will no longer give myself up to the unavailing melancholy that renders me incapable of fulfilling my duties towards my God and towards my fellow-men. I will banish from my mind all gloomy images, and will cease to torment myself with questionings as to whether I had done enough for the dear departed one, or whether I had not neglected some kindness that might have been shown him either during health or illness. If this

has been the case, it was the will of Providence that it should be so. How can man with his limited insight and power hope to escape errors and shortcomings?

God willed the death of him for whom I have wept so much; he was ripe for the better world. Before I drew the breath of life, before my lost one was born, God had fixed his last hour. The germ of his destiny began to unfold from the first moment he beheld the light of the world, and the appointed events of his life commenced their influence. He was still smiling cheerfully in the circle of his relatives, when he began to die, and the angel of death was hovering over him. His death and the very hour which it took place were the consequence of a moment long past and unknown to him. All the skill of the physician, all my tending, could not have added one span to his life. The bright light was to be extinguished. In all probability the treatment by the physician, my care, and my prayers were also included in the pre-ordained concatenation of events. God's providence had taken these also into account, and permitted part of their activity to take effect, but only the useful part. And when the life of the dear one was ripe for the sickle, all human skill and care proved unavailing. But God's will was carried out. And shall I dare to complain? Am I wiser than Divine Providence? Kinder than the Creator? I loved the dear one who has gone to rest; but God also loved him. What God doeth is well done. He separated a beloved soul from me. My tears flow.

God separated! Nay, God of Love, Thou dost not separate souls Thou hast once united! Who says that my glorified friend is lost to me? That which

is with God cannot be lost. And am I not in God's hand, and my beloved likewise? Am I not in my Father's house, and my beloved also? I live, but thou also, O cherished soul, art living! I think of thee with a sad, yearning heart; canst thou have ceased to think of me? Can love be extinguished, when God is love?

Thou rejoicest to-day in thy more perfect state, in the better world! While my tears are flowing thou mayest be exulting in new-born bliss. While I stammer forth thy earthly name with trembling lips, thou mayest be awaiting my approaching arrival with joyful anticipation. O glorified spirit, God's love has perhaps vouchsafed to thee a happiness which in my mortal state I am incapable of conceiving! Thou seest me in my lonely sorrow, thou lovest me, hoverest around me, guidest me! Perhaps thou art one of the guardian angels who carry out the Lord's behests in regard to me.

Nay, we are not separated. The divine universe is but one. This earth forms part of the divine edifice; the present hour forms part of eternity. I enjoy it here on earth, and thou enjoyest it in happier regions. We still belong to each other, although thou hast gone in earlier to the Father, by whom I, also, shall one day be called. And of what great importance is it whether we be summoned to enter the Holy of Holies an hour earlier or an hour later? I am not yet called because I have still much of my Father's work to do on earth. His holy will be done. I know that for me, also, unutterable felicity is in store, when I shall have completed my course. Whether it be in this year or in another, what matters it? What is the longest duration of man's career? A fleeting

morning dream. When it is passed, and the hour strikes, oh then to meet again, to stand face to face again to thee, shall be the reward of my faithful, glorified spirit. To be reunited to thee! To see thee again! O thought full of heavenly rapture! To meet thee again, absent angel, whose loss I am ever lamenting! What a moment will that be in the paradise of the better world! As human beings, we should cling to each other with tears of unspeakable joy; as glorified spirits, we shall bow down in grateful adoration of God, and be dissolved in bliss.

Reunion! But can it be possible? On what do I ground the sweet hope? Whence does it come to me?

O Thou, whose wisdom has so often lifted my soul to God, whose word has never deceived me, whose promises have ever been wonderfully fulfilled, — Jesus Christ, eternal Son of the living Father, sent to comfort suffering humanity, Thou hast inspired me with this hope and trust. When on the cross, Thou spakest to thy fellow-sufferer, “Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke xxiii. 43), Thou didst speak words of rapturous hope to all sorrowing souls.

He, for whom I am weeping here in the dust, has not been taken from me forever. We shall be reunited; God’s voice has promised it. Even in material nature I perceive a wonderful striving of dissevered forces towards reunion. Those elements which belong together will, in spite of all man’s efforts to separate them, always finds the means of reuniting. I see throughout creation that among the living organisms as well as in inanimate matter, certain beings and certain things are in closer affinity to each other

than others, and are ever mutually attracting one another, and amalgamating. Throughout God's great kingdom there is a division and a connection of things, as in families ; they adhere to each other, they always find each other again. Were it not for this fundamental principle in creation, the world would be a chaos, and endless confusion of forces and phenomena ; there would be no separation and no combination. But light ever blends with light, earth with earth. Watery particles rise up from ocean, lakes, and rivers, but return again from the skies as rain or dew. Each thing finds its like. I am astounded at the effects even of the elective affinities in lifeless matter, in which like always seeks and amalgamates irresistibly with like, while it rejects whatever is foreign to it. And what we call elective affinity and sympathy in the material world, is love in the spiritual realm. God himself is the highest power of love, hence the never-satisfied yearning of the spirit for union with him, for happiness in him, for perfection.

And if this divine law of attraction and reunion rules on earth, and in the high heavens, as far as my eye can penetrate the various families or galaxies of stars, — where every planet has its satellite, where every sun belongs to a special system of planets, — can we suppose that it rules less in the world of the higher spirits, where that which in lifeless things is but a vague impulse, is raised and ennobled into a conscious sentiment? — in that world where dwells God, the source of all love, where his laws and his works are but the results of love?

It is true, the form in which the beloved being became dear to me on earth rests in the grave. But in reality it was not this perishable form that I loved,

but the imperishable spirit; and the veil that surrounded the lovely soul was only dear to me because of its connection with the angel spirit whom it concealed. The veil has fallen, but the angel lives! But shall I meet him again? If so, how shall I recognize him, since he has lost that outer form in which alone I knew him.

Why these questions so full of doubt? Poor mortal, hast thou measured the power of God? By what means do the elementary bodies in creation find and recognize each other?

When bright-eyed spring awakes, millions of plants stand forth in the full bloom of their loveliness, and each species sends forth through the air its golden pollen to the others of its kind. Without this pollen fructification is impossible. These blossoms are often separated by considerable distances, and yet the pollen, the almost invisible dust, finds the flower for which it is intended. Among millions of flowers it floats as if attracted by some magic power towards that one only which is of similar nature to itself. Here in this earthly part of creation is a miracle which I witness every year. And is this miracle of the Almighty not an indication of the things of eternity? That infinite power of God which guides the fructifying pollen from afar to the only flower that awaits it, can it fail in the realm of higher beings, more closely akin to the Godhead? Oh yes; there is reunion after death! That which God has united is united forever. Therefore, O beloved spirit! beloved through eternity! we can never be parted. Thou in heaven, and I on earth, belong to each other forever. Be happy in the higher regions where thou dwellest. I shall one day be with you in paradise. Why, then,

should I weep? We are both living in the great house of our Father. To me thy absence is pain, it is true; but I could not, would not, wish that thou shouldst again wander with me here on earth among the living. Even had I the power to call thee down again from thy blissful habitation, I would not do so. For thou hast fought the good fight; thou hast won the victory; it is not for thee to return to me, but for me to hasten to thee. I know the way that will lead me to thee without fail, — it is the path of earnest dutifulness, the sincere Christian spirit with which I fulfill God's behests on earth, — it is the way to God himself. Sin and vice only can separate me from God and thee.

My anguish was great at thy death, but great is now the joy of my soul. Thou, O blessed spirit, art my beloved still, and thou drawest me with hollowed bonds after thee into the better world. Through the love of spirits, heaven and earth are made akin. Some of my dear ones are with God. What a heavenly thought is not this!

Father in heaven, my Father and Father of the glorified souls that belong to me! As in the cruel hour of parting I raised my hands to Thee in anxious supplication, and with streaming eyes I prayed, "Oh, leave me my beloved!" in like manner, Father, I now raise my hands to Thee, with exultant satisfaction, crying, "Thanks that Thou didst call away my precious one!" His death has, indeed, deeply shaken my whole being, but it has made me nobler, holier, more religious. I feel myself drawn nearer to Thee; I feel more alienated from earth and all its belongings, and will never again give myself up to these with immoderate ardor; a bond is established

between me and eternity which can never be destroyed. I no longer live on earth only ; I live, also, in heaven with Thee, and the dear one whom Thou gavest me, and whom Thou didst take away.

There was a time when the thought of death and the grave overwhelmed me and made me shudder. How could I, indeed, love death and the grave, when to me they were only the great gulf that threatened to swallow up my happiness ! Then the earth was still a heaven to me, and thy heaven, O God, a sacred desert, in which I thought of myself as a stranger, whom no one there knew or loved. And I feared death, and recoiled from the unknown land.

Now it is the goal of my longings ; there is my haven of rest, my home, all that I most treasure ! There are the companions of my heart, of my life ! And when I feel most happy among my friends on earth, the thought comes to me, In heaven thou wilt be happier still ! When gloom settles on earthly things, I say to myself, Yonder all will be clear and unclouded.

Through Jesus Christ I will render myself worthy of the bliss Thou hast prepared for me from the beginning of time. O Father, I will do thy bidding ! I will live a life of love and devotion to my fellow-men, so that I may hereafter, in my glorified state, enjoy thy love. Amen. Help me, O Lord Jesus, Light of my soul ! Amen.

INTERPRETATIONS OF ETERNITY.

FIFTH MEDITATION. *

REUNION.

When o'er my cold and narrow bed,
The last fond parting tear is shed
By sorrowing friendship, broken-hearted,
In that blest life shall I rejoice,
Where round me sounds each dear one's voice,
Where God again unites the parted.

What we begin in weakness here
Shall rise to full perfection there, —
Perfect! eternal! — *one* the word.
The earthly germ of purest love
Can only bloom in heaven above;
For there is bliss, and there the Lord.

(JOHN xvi. 16-22.)

RISE up, O my soul, from the tumult of this life, into thy true freedom; throw off the burden of thy sorrows and expand in the hope of eternal peace; look up from the whirl of pleasure, and contemplate thy higher destination!

For what is this drop of earthly life in which thou at present revellest, when compared to the ocean of infinite glory which will be opened to thy admiring gaze when this short dream is past? What is all the pomp of the earth, all the glitter of golden dust here below, when compared to the splendor that will meet thine eyes at the portals of Eternity? Ah, why waste thy admiration on the poor torch with which

thou illuminest thy dwelling? What is it compared to the lustre of the sun, in whose effulgence countless worlds float, drinking in light and heat and life?

Yea, Eternity, final goal towards which all are hastening, — the sorrowing and the joyful, the king and the beggar, the sage and the fool, the old man and the laughing child, — Eternity, that awaits us all, be thou to-day the subject of my thoughts! The very mention of thy name makes my soul feel freer, nobler, purer! Earthly things, which at other times fill me with pleasure, or wound me with thorns, seem insignificant and contemptible in thy presence. Religion is more attractive, more divine, more exalting, when it awakens in my bosom wonderful presentiments of a future existence. Eternity, at the thought of which levity shudders, sin turns pale, and the skeptic trembles in doubt, — Eternity, consummator of all that is begun, retributive judge with sword and palm-branch, all-reconciling, all-equalizing Eternity, — thou art the comforter of the sage, the joyful hope of the Christian!

To me also thou shalt bring consolation and hope, — consolation, when I weep over my unhappy lot; hope, when amid a cheerful circle of friends I rejoice in life. Consolation, when my views of life become obscured by melancholy; hope, when in the midst of joy and happiness the thought forces itself upon me, Everything changes, and what man possesses is taken from him again! Consolation, when the hand of death robs me of my dear ones, when I stand sorrowing by their death-bed, gazing with tearful eyes at their pale, cold, rigid features, which will never again smile sweetly upon me; hope, when one day death beckons me also, and I must part from souls tenderly devoted to me, from affectionate friends and weeping orphans.

O Eternity, my hope and consolation, revealed to me through Jesus Christ, thou storest up for me all the treasures of joy which have fled from me here below! Why, then, should I tremble before thee? Towards thee the storm-wind carries the sweet blossoms, which it here snatches from my wreath of joys. Why, then, tremble at the thought of thee? In thee, and in thee only, can I find again that which I have lost on earth, and that which I shall leave behind me on earth, when I, in my turn, am called away. What deep and rapturous emotion is caused by the thought, that I shall find again what I have lost! That in eternity I may hope to see again those whom I saw and loved on earth! O my dear, my beloved parents! O affectionate companions of my childhood! O ye who were bound to my heart by ties of love and tenderness! O ye whom my tears, my silent despair, could not recall to life! O ye who departed sorrowfully from me to go over into the better existence, — *I shall find you again! I shall see you again!*

My heart swells with new and heavenly joy, — my eyes o'erflow with tears of longing, — my spirit, rising on the wings of prayer, guided by the light of religion, approaches the mysterious portals of eternity; it draws nigh unto you in the lovely and distant worlds in which God dwells, and where you abide, in a nobler, happier state than mine. I am still here in the prison-house of earth; ye are free in the higher world! I am still weak and imperfect, now dwelling in sunshine, now in shade; ye revel in the never-clouded brightness of the Deity, of the angels, and the blessed! Oh, could ye hear the voice of my heart, could ye see the tears with which I yearn for you! I call to you, I sob forth the prayer, Remember in your

beatitude the one you left behind, and who will love you evermore! There is a God, *and God will reunite us!*

We shall see each other again! It is no dream, it is no delusion! Jesus, the sanctifier of the world, Jesus, the Revealer of God, has promised it to his followers.

He spake the sweetest of all consolations when, in one of the most trying hours of his life, he foretold to his disciples the tribulations and persecutions they would have to endure; and endeavored to prepare these men, who clung to him with childlike simplicity and devotion, for his death, his going in to the Father. "A little while, and ye shall not see me; again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. Ye now have sorrow; *but I will see you again*, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." (John xvi. 16, 22.)

We shall see each other again! In that fearful hour of death when Christ, bleeding on the cross, seemed abandoned by God, a malefactor, condemned to the same death as himself, but full of faith, prayed to him for comfort, and Jesus gave him the most blessed of all consolations. "Verily," so spake the World-Redeemer, and spake it with dying voice, — "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke xxiii. 43.)

Can I doubt when Jesus speaks, Jesus, the miraculous Heaven-sent Messenger, Jesus, born of God, and who came to enlighten the dark world of spirits in accordance with the will of the Eternal Father? Can I doubt the word of life which he brought to many? In whom could I believe if not in him? Is there any one who before him or after him has pro-

claimed more sublime and sacred truths? Who has there been before or after him who, like him, has taught in such a way that the wisest of living men, and the simplest child, could follow him as an unerring guide? Who has before him or since given such an example to the world of holy living? Who has, like him, taught the human race self-knowledge, and pointed out its true dignity and destination?

We shall see each other again! Jesus hath said it. With deepest fervor my faith embraces this divine truth, which I hold from him, and which is in such perfect harmony with God's love and greatness; which affords a sacred key to the thousand dark mysteries of life on earth, and without which I can see naught in creation but saddest contradiction, aimlessness, and confusion.

Thou sayest, O melancholy skeptic: "I cannot conceive how we shall be able to find each other and to recognize each other in that other world! For though the spirit may go into a happier existence, the body, through means of which we know each other here below, remains in the grave, and returns to the dust from whence it came." I admit that dust returns to dust; but it was not dust which was loved by dust, — it was the soul which clung lovingly to another soul. Thou doubttest, because thou canst not solve the mysteries of eternity. Thou doubttest, because thy limited understanding cannot fathom the depths of God's omniscience and omnipotence. Thou doubttest, because thou dost not know in what form the spirit is clad after death. He who would know this, he would embrace and understand the entire order of creation, he must himself be God. This thou art not.

The limitations of thy understanding preclude thee from the highest *knowledge*; but the force of thy reason impels thee to nourish the highest *faith*. And the laws of reason are the voice of the Deity! To resist these laws is to descend to the level of the animals, and is a proof of insanity. Be what thou wert meant to be, what thou art bound to be, — a reasonable being, — and thou wilt at once find that the most perfect accordance reigns in the universe.

But whatever the cavilling skeptic may say, he can only *assert* that it is possible that death may separate us forever! But he can prove nothing against the hope that whispers, It is possible that we may meet again on the other side of the grave! His arguments are mere conjectures, inspired by his splenetic mood, or, perhaps, by a vain desire to say something striking. His own feelings must revolt against these weapons, with which, weak as they are, he would endeavor to shake the power of his own faith, and the faith of all nations, civilized or savage. Even in soulless nature, we perceive that kindred forces mutually attract each other in obedience to laws unknown to us. And when dust flies to dust to unite itself with it, how can we suppose that higher organizations, self-conscious beings, should be excluded from the rule of these beneficent laws of attraction? Are our spirits of less importance than the pollen, which escapes from the cup of the flower to seek, among a thousand others, for one of similar nature which it may fructify? Skeptic, explain to me this incomprehensible wonder, and I will explain to thee how self-conscious, self-directing, and living spirits find each other again, and satisfy their yearnings in the regions of eternity.

Was it man who prescribed for man the law of eternal love? Was it man who implanted in his own bosom all the best affections? Was it man who, together with the sentiment of love, created its desire for everlasting duration? Nay, it was God's hand that planted these feelings in our hearts; it was God who inspired the desire of kindred souls for eternal union. And He who bound us together here on earth, for a brief space of time, by such tender ties, — He who is Love, Mercy, Goodness, — would He dissever again, for no purpose, the bonds which He Himself had woven? He, the Most Blessed, would He inflict upon us woe greater than the most cruel of men could subject us to? He, the all-holy One, would He delude us through means of our holiest feelings, and deceive us in the hour of death? He who bids our hearts to love, would He desire to witness our despair?

Base and terrible thought, flee from me. I believe in the all-perfect God, and with this faith comes the tranquillizing conviction that He will not dissever the sacred ties that bind soul to soul, and which He himself created. He is all-perfect and cannot repent of any of his works. How, then, should He repent the noblest of his inspirations and provisions, — the mutual love of souls, their happiness, and its duration?

God is! Therefore shall we, who were created for each other, meet again. *He* is the Creator, and he is love! We shall see each other again, we shall belong to each other again; eternity will satisfy the longings of millions of noble souls.

What would immortality be without the immortality of my consciousness, without a continuance of my higher essence? And is it not the power of virtue

and love in the soul, which alone gives me any value in my own eyes, and makes the world of any value to me?

Immortality without the consciousness that I have previously existed, without connection with the past, would not be immortality, but annihilation. Were I to be born again in eternity without any consciousness of my past existence, my birth would be nothing more than the creation of a new being, who had never until then existed.

No; God is! And sure as he is eternal and all-perfect, I am immortal; and being so, the power of my spirit, my virtue, my love, cannot die with my body. Every nightly slumber on earth is like unto death, and every awakening like the new existence. Each morn when I arise from sleep the remembrance of my previous life, my acquired virtues, my sentiments of friendship, return. Explain to me, O skeptic, what makes this miracle possible every morning; then will I explain how it is possible that kindred souls should recognize each other, and cling to each other, in eternity also.

Were those bonds, which God had knit together, to be dissevered forever by death; were my faithful love and the hope of sweet reunion to die with my body, — oh then all that seems to me most glorious in God's world would be disjointed and annihilated! My soul would be robbed of its most precious treasures, of its sweetest joys, — all eternity would be to me like a place of banishment, where my bereaved soul would roam about, searching in vain for what it had lost. Oh in that case, an everlasting grave would be far preferable to an everlasting life, in which love could only weep hopelessly at the remembrance of its

losses. Then we should shun love and friendship on earth even more than envy and hatred. Then the greater part of the earthly life of millions and millions of noble human spirits will have been as naught. Oh then I should implore the Eternal Love to root out all affection from my heart. My cry to God would be: Why didst Thou give me a heart, if such wounds were to be inflicted on it? Why didst Thou lead beloved souls towards me, if Thou didst mean to tear them away from me again? Why didst Thou bestow upon me this sentiment of love, this heart full of faith, if it only enables me to feel more deeply my losses, only gives me the capacity for more intense suffering? In vain, then, is the hope which makes husband or wife die with the name of the beloved spouse on his or her lips, which makes a sister pronounce the name of a dear brother, or a tender mother that of her darling child? Eternity would thus be an infinitely enduring, never-satisfied longing, — a never-ceasing lamentation over losses never to be repaired.

Nay, sad skeptic, listen to the words of Jesus, who promises us reunion in eternity! Listen to the voice of reason, which condemns those insane doubts of thine, that would throw the world into confusion, and would make thine own life and the whole of creation appear aimless and disjointed! Acknowledge what experience teaches thee each day, what the entire history of the world, what every look at the wide creation teaches thee, — *God leaves nothing incomplete which He has created!* He does not begin, and then leave unfinished; He is eternal, and eternal is all that He has brought into existence.

One of the most blessed and tranquillizing reasons for the belief in the immortality of the soul is the

inward aspiration after virtue, and the happiness attendant upon this, which the Deity has implanted in us. The goal we thus strive for is seldom reached on earth; the virtuous man is often the most unhappy; therefore, only in eternity can this thirst for perfection and for happiness be satisfied; but there it must be satisfied, if everything here below is not to be looked upon as aimless, and if virtue itself is not to be deemed a vain delusion.

Every reason for belief in the immortality of the soul is at the same time a reason for the belief that kindred souls will meet again in eternity. Alas! what manifold sufferings do not noble beings here below endure for the sake of their beloved ones,—friend for friend, parents for children. And can we suppose that these tears, these cares, these sacrifices, will remain unrequited? Death robs them of the noblest, the dearest, part of their life; and you suppose that their grief would remain unheeded, forgotten, by the justice of an all-loving Godhead?

No, no; the heart revolts against this thought; reason condemns it; the divine words spoken by the lips of Jesus contradict it.

Dwell ever with me, sweet and heavenly faith, that I shall one day meet again, in the land where tears never flow, all the dear ones whom I have lost here below. This faith dispels the gloom of life. In its light God and his creation, life and eternity, appear in more glorious connection and accordance.

We shall meet again, — what matters it how and where? God is there as here, and his will is our bliss. We shall be reunited, O ye ever-beloved souls! it is no dream, no empty delusion, that we shall belong to each other forevermore.

Ah ye, whose lowly graves the green mould of forgetfulness is already overspreading, ye are not forgotten by me. My heart still beats for you as when it responded to yours ; my eyes still shed tears at the remembrance of our parting. We are not separated forever. Perhaps ye remember me in yon happier religions, as I remember you here below. For me this life has no longer any attractions. I have no rest, no joy, but with you ; my every wish follows you into the better world. And ye, O ye blessed ones ! perhaps ye smile at my grief as glorified spirits smile, knowing how near is the hour of reunion. Ye smile as does the husband, who after long absence from his beloved spouse draws nigh unknown to her, and while she is still lamenting over the separation.

Ah ; when shall I again embrace you ? When shall I cease to sigh ? When shall I again, in intimate and eternal union with you, praise the Lord and Creator for our ineffable bliss ? Even the remembrance of our life on this earth will still be dear to us ; for here we found each other ; here it was that God gave us to each other ; here our souls blended with each other !

O God, Thou art love ! Why do I continue to weep for the dead ? They have gone to Thee, and I shall see the blessed ones again ! To those who have faith in thy fatherly love, even the pain of waiting becomes a sweet enjoyment. Calmly I bide the hour when Thou wilt lead me in to the dear ones. With rapturous delight I look forward to an eternity of bliss, and with thankfulness I look up to Him who has prepared this happiness for me from the beginning of all things.

INTERPRETATIONS OF ETERNITY.

SIXTH MEDITATION.

REUNION.

Ah, no! The universe is not a dream;
This life is not a fragment cast aside;
Each is a part of the eternal scheme,
By which a better life to this is tied.
Departed spirits do but soar above;
The lost on earth, the dear ones whom we love,
Wait till we stand, uprisen, by their side.

O blessed promise, which the Saviour gave,
Thou fillest us with rapture, ever-growing;
Thou shinest over every loved one's grave
On which our sorrowing tears are sadly flowing.
Thou guidest our weary souls along the road
That leads us heavenward, through faith, to God,
And to a union which no end is knowing.

(REVELATION iii. 21.)

THOU art taught by the revelations of Jesus; by the voice of the past sounding through a thousand years; by the evidences in nature, from the grain of sand to the glittering star; and by thy inward monitor, thy conscience. Thou confessest: *Yes, there is a God!* an almighty, all-holy, all-just Being, who created the universe, and who directs the lifeless forces in it; who, as the Eternal Spirit, loves all spirits as his children; who does not repent of what He created in his omniscience; who does not destroy the least grain of sand in his creation, and much less

the nobler energies in it, — the human spirits which are capable of conceiving God and honoring Him.

Thou confessest that there is a God, and in so doing thou confessest *that immortality must necessarily be the destiny of our souls!*

But if thy soul be immortal, thou canst not but admit that, in some way or other, consciousness must be retained after death. For not to be aware of thy identity is the same as annihilation. Or not to know that thou art the same that existed previously, and how thou didst exist, is not continuance, but a new beginning, — a new creation.

Were we not to be conscious after death of our previous existence, our goodness, our nobility of soul, the sacrifices made by us on earth would all be useless. For of what avail would be a reward in the next world, an amelioration in our condition, if that which led to it had been forgotten? Or why should our sins be judged on high, why should retributive justice be meted out to us in the degradation of our spirits, if we are not aware of how we have merited our punishment, our degradation? Retribution in the next world would be meaningless, rewards and punishments after death might as well be so many acts of injustice, or at least be called so. Virtue here on earth, the improvement of the soul, vice, its degradation, would — if there be no connection between this life and the next — be almost a matter of indifference. Whoever believes in the perfect justice of God, whoever believes in the absolute holiness of God, must also believe in a *true continuation* of the spirit life; *i. e.* in a *continuance without interruption*, in an intimate spiritual connection between the here and the hereafter.

Such a connection, however, is impossible, unless the soul retain the consciousness of its previous existence. The soul, when once emancipated from the imperfect earthly coil which often impeded its activity, may perhaps in the next world develop a vigor of which, in our present state, we can form no conception. Thus in the dreams of the old man while his body sleeps, memories from his youth, or his early manhood, which in his waking state he had completely forgotten, are often revived with wonderful distinctness.

This belief in the connection between the future state and the present has not only at all times prevailed among all nations which have emerged from the first stage of barbarism, but Jesus, the Divine Man, also shadowed it forth in that first parable in which he endeavors to impress upon men the coming of a day of retribution. (Matt. xxv. 31-46.) He introduces the righteous, and puts these words into their mouth: "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink?" Yes; Jesus who was filled with divine wisdom, and to whom divine revelations were vouchsafed, hath declared to us mortals, not only the undying nature of our souls, but also the uninterrupted continuance of the consciousness of our acts. But this continuance of consciousness is not possible, unless we retain the remembrance also of those persons with whom we have been intimately connected on earth. For the greater number of our actions have had reference to them; they have induced our virtues and our vices; they have been the objects of our love or of our hatred, of our generosity or of our malignity of our mercy or of our cruelty.

To the earthly understanding which knows only earthly means it may indeed be difficult to comprehend how and in what way the recognition between those whom God's love bound together in this world by the ties of affection shall take place in the next. But is it not folly to reject a thing as were it not, merely because with our limited earthly faculties we are unable to conceive or to imagine it? Must not the higher beings, if they be witnesses of our weakness and our conceit, smile at our folly, as we smile at the ignorance of the savage, who refuses to believe in the possibility of men communicating their intimate thoughts to each other in full detail, without being in presence of each other, and without the aid of the voice? He also mocks at any one who tells him, "There are men who possess higher minds and greater cultivation than we; they can communicate and make themselves intelligible to each other, though separated by thousands of miles, though mountains, seas, rivers, and deserts intervene between them." And when he is told of the art of letter-writing, he takes it for supernatural sorcery.

Is not the relation in which we stand to our future more exalted state, and to our present comprehension of it, very much the same as that in which the savage stands to us?

The belief in the recognition of, and reunion with, our beloved ones of this world in the future existence beyond the grave, is coincident with the belief in true immortality. We cannot separate the one from the other without at once destroying our conception of the perfection and love of God. Therefore, though our ideas of the future life may be very imperfect, and indeed they cannot be otherwise, let us remain

satisfied with vague foreshadowings of what will be our destiny there. We are but children; let us, then, think of, and believe in, that future existence with childlike simplicity. For that which will take place when the corruptible shall put on incorruption, that no mortal can conceive, no human language express.

Yet the influence of the thought of immortality and of reunion in eternity on the heart is such, that we cannot but desire frequently to occupy ourselves with it. Our Divine Master did not in vain give us a conception of it. We shall recognize each other, and our deeds shall cleave to us. He distinctly tells us this in his description of the great day of judgment and retribution. "Where have we seen Thee? Where have we had an opportunity of doing good to Thee?" inquire the righteous and the sinners in the parable; and the answer is: "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me." (Matt. xxv. 40.)

The thought of reunion in eternity has, as I have said, a powerful influence on our moral life. What wonder is it that those who cannot look forward to this reunion otherwise than as a moment of indescribable terror, should try to destroy their own belief in it? What wonder is it that those who cannot dwell on the idea without shuddering, should prefer to exert their intellect to the utmost to find plausible arguments against its truth, — should prefer to live in contradiction with their own reason, with their own conceptions of the power, greatness, wisdom, and justice of God, rather than admit this truth?

But not what man wills, not what he chooses, will take place, but what the Eternal God wills, that

which He has preordained in the harmonious organization of the universe, that which He has revealed to us by general and unmistakable intuitions, that which He has declared to us through his holy Word.

Yea, frivolous mother and unprincipled father, ye shall stand face to face again with the children whom ye neglected, whom ye left in such shameful ignorance, that vice sprung up in their hearts as weeds spring up in the uncleansed soil. You will recognize them in their degraded state, and their crimes will rise up in judgment against you, even yon side the grave, — for it was your guilty neglect that left their young hearts to go astray.

And thou who here on earth, in thy base selfishness, art a world and a God to thyself; who, entertaining supreme indifference towards thy fellow-men, thinkest only of thyself, and esteemest those fools who labor disinterestedly for others, or perhaps even sacrifice part of their own happiness to secure that of their fellow-creatures; who wilt thou meet in eternity? Thou who never thoughtest of others, but only of thyself, who wilt thou meet to give to thee those thanks that are due to virtue? No one! Thou wilt stand alone in the better world, alone and unloved, a stranger to all who surround thee. No loving soul is there yearning for thy presence. Thou art one of those who have had their reward. For thou didst selfishly stipulate and receive thy payment for whatever good thou mayest have done on earth. When thou gavest alms, when thou didst found charitable institutions, or contribute thy mite to undertakings for the benefit of the commonwealth, it was with a desire to gain favor in the eyes of the world, it was with a view to reaping honors in return.

Thou hast passed through life without love, without friendship, because thou believedst all other men to be as selfish and as basely interested as thyself, — without love, without friendship, thou shalt enter the ranks of the immortals, and stand alone among the blessed.

We shall meet again in eternity ! Tremble, covetous wretch and heartless profligate, who have despoiled the unprotected widow and helpless orphans, or squandered in dissipation the sums which pious forefathers bequeathed for the assistance of the indigent and unfortunate. Know that every sigh your hard-heartedness has drawn from those you have oppressed has been heard by the omnipresent God ! Know that the tears which some poor innocent has shed in secret at your injustice have been seen by an omniscient God ! And these sighs will be counted out to you, and the tears measured before you. You will meet again the unhappy victims whom you deceived with impunity here below. In the next world your deeds of darkness will be dragged into broad daylight. Your hypocrisy will be of no avail yonder, where the All-Just One reigns and judges. Delude yourselves on earth, delude others as well ; but in the end no delusion can prevail ! Proclaim, while here on earth, there is no God, no eternity, no reunion ! Even here, the voice of conscience, in serious moments, contradicts the subtle falsehood ; even here, your guilty hearts palpitate at the fearful thought ; but God is, and yon side the grave is eternity, where judgment, and the spirits of those you have wronged, await you ! Your intellectual subtlety, your loud denial, cannot destroy eternal truth.

God, eternity, judgment, and meeting again of

spirits! Listen to this, shameless voluptuary; and turn pale at the *possibility*, tremble at the *reality*! Listen to this, deceitful seducer of innocence; listen to this, father of poor, abandoned, despised orphans, on whom thou hast bestowed life, poverty, and shame; thou shalt meet them again! Those whom thou hast disowned in this world, those whom here on earth thou madest the companions of wretchedness and despair, shall witness against thee in eternity! Merciless father and seducer, there is a God and a day of retribution; and that day will find thee without consolation. The innocence that fell a victim to thy lusts, and which was by thee given over to perdition and everlasting tears of despair, shall witness against thee!

The thought of those who have known each other on earth meeting again in eternity fills the sinner's heart with dismay; but in vain the soul, conscious of its own guilt, resists the conviction. To the holier spirits only is the thought welcome; only to virtuous minds it brings unutterably sweet hopes. It gives them a vivid sense of the undying nature of nobility of soul, of their own dignity, and of their high destination. It renders life less burdensome to them, and sweetens the hour of death. It strengthens their endeavors to grow in virtue, and their power to overcome evil. They understand the meaning of the sacred words: "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." (Rev. ii. 11.)

Righteous old man, who with failing powers art tottering towards the end of thy career, weary, and longing for rest, — thou art happy! Thou knowest what awaits thee; thou knowest what thou leavest! What happiness has earth still for thee? Thy senses

are blunted ; thy spirit can no longer work through them, no longer reveal itself through them with the same power. Thus also in the old fruit-tree, though the wonderful vital force (the soul of the tree) is present in unabated vigor, the delicate vessels and tubes through which the nourishing sap, drawn from the earth, is sent upwards through every branch and twig, have become time-worn and hardened. Therefore, though the branches are still clad in verdure, the leaves are sparse, and the tree bears neither bloom nor fruit.

Thou hast almost become a stranger on earth. The play-fellows of thy youth have long since departed, all thy best friends thou hast survived, — even the greater number of the faithful companions of thy later years are in the grave. They have gone to rest, and thy dust will soon repose by the side of theirs.

But beyond the grave is thy fatherland ; there reunion with all the beloved of thy soul awaits thee ; there thou wilt be surrounded by the angels of thy childhood ; there thou wilt behold once more the smile of the beings thou lovedst so tenderly here below, but whose eyes thou sawest grow dim in death. Soon thy disenthralled spirit will speed to meet them, exclaiming, with exultant joy : “Blessed am I ! I have fought a good fight ; blessed be the ineffable love of the eternal Father of spirits !”

We shall meet again ! Youth and maiden, righteous children of righteous parents, who lament over the death of father and mother, you will meet them again ! The love of these parents was what you valued most on earth. When cares oppressed you, your father’s affectionate solicitude soon relieved you

of the burden ; when sorrow weighed upon, you our tender mother knew how to alleviate it. They have been called away from you ; but yet a little while and they will be restored to you.

There is a way that leads to them, often full of thorns, and wearisome to wander, but unfailing. This is the way which Jesus indicated to his beloved disciples, that they might find him again. It is the path of virtue, of holy sentiments, and deeds. Never depart from this heavenly path, never be unfaithful to the memory of your parents.

When your youthful blood glows with unwonted passions ; when vice approaches you in seductive garb ; when turbulent desires lead you into perilous temptations ; when a moment comes in which you feel yourselves wavering between innocence and guilt, between generosity and meanness ; when all good resolves seem to abandon you ; when even the voice of religion has lost its power over your hearts, — Oh then think of the beloved deceased and of your future meeting with them, and you will recover your dignity, and resume your allegiance to virtue !

Remember the beloved ones who have gone before you, and your future reunion with them, when you are praying in the house of God, and when at your daily avocations. Remember them when you are quaffing the cup of pleasure, when you are engaged in the turmoil of business, and when depressed by misfortune, — and you will not lose sight of the path that leads to them ! Love is an invisible spiritual bond ; it reaches across the grave into the happy regions of the better world ; it knits together kindred souls on earth and in heaven, in like manner as the love of God embraces the entire universe, and upholds, and blesses it.

Remember the beloved ones and your reunion with them whenever an opportunity offers to perform a noble deed, to do good to an enemy, to rebuke the evil-speaking of a slanderer, to help a poor and suffering family, to originate some undertaking of a generally useful character, — you will then fight the good fight for the crown of life, and your guardian angels will rejoice, for eternity is opening its portals to you.

We shall be reunited! Dry your tears, O father or mother, who art weeping for a beloved and promising child, and thou also, lonely widow, sorrowing in solitude; cease to grieve, sister, for thy much-regretted brother, or brother for thy sister; friend, mourn no longer for the friend torn from thy bosom. Close all wounds that torture tender hearts! The dead are still alive. We are not parted forever. Reunion awaits us all!

Divinely revealed truth, be my blessed comfort evermore. I also have lost what I loved. I also, when in solitude, weep for the sweetest joys of my life, which have descended into the grave. Into the grave? Ah, no; for it was not the clay that I loved, but the soul, which smiled to me through the gentle eyes, and which spoke the words of tenderness that sounded from the eloquent lips. And this soul still lives, for God lives. It still loves, for God loves. O heavenly thought! I am still cherished by my dear ones in the better world, with a purer, nobler, and more tender affection than here in the dust.

Ye love me, O ye dear ones, for whom my tears flow, whom my love follows yon side the grave. Love me, and the grave cannot separate us. How can it separate those whom God united here below in such

tender bonds? My sadness is not the fruit of doubt, but of my longing for you. We shall be with each other again in that blessed land, where there is no sorrow and no parting, but only perfection and bliss inexpressible. The Creator made us for each other, and he created us not only for this earthly life, but for eternal existence. In this world he only allowed us, as it were, to catch a glimpse of each other, that we might aspire the more ardently towards our higher goal. He attached our hearts to heaven, not only by the bonds of faith, but likewise by those of love.

Yes; on the other side of the grave, not here on earth, is my real fatherland, my true home. Towards the land where my loved ones dwell turn my tearful eyes; to it ascend my devout thoughts, my sacred vows. Yes; though abiding on earth, I will live for eternity; among mortals I will live for the immortal ones who have gone before me. If there be a sin cleaving to me, I will cleanse myself of it. If there be an impure desire poisoning my heart, I will banish it forthwith. If there be a wrong that I have committed, I will repair it. If there be a fellow-being whom I have offended, I will seek reconciliation.

We shall, we must, be reunited. O God, I thank thee for thy overflowing grace and mercy. What return can I make? I feel my poverty, my impotence; but I feel also that through thee, my God, my Eternal Father, the universe is blest. I will seek solitude, I will fall down before Thee, with mingled tears of sadness and joy, and my sighs and my tears shall glorify Thee in silence.

MEMORIAL FESTIVAL OF OUR TRIUMPH OVER DEATH.

Yes; thou shalt rise again, my dust, more blest
After thy hasty rest.
Undying life to live,
Will He who made thee give.
Praised be He!

Sown but to bloom again once more, was I.
The Harvest Lord goes by;
He gathers in the sheaves,
Nor thine, nor mine He leaves:
Praised be He!

O day of gratitude! O day of bliss!
God's own best day is this,
Which, my short slumber o'er,
From the cold grave once more
Shall waken me.

How like a dream will it then seem to me;
With Jesus shall I be,
In all his joys I share,
Each weary pilgrim care
Is past for me.

Oh, to the Holiest, my Redeemer, lead, —
Then shall I live indeed
In sanctity; there raise
My voice, his name to praise,
Forevermore!

(LUKE xxiv. 5, 6.)

WHY *seek ye the living among the dead?* asked the angels of the sorrowing women who came to the sepulchre of the Saviour; “He is not here, but is risen.” (Luke xxiv. 5, 6.)

He is risen! The disciples heard the tidings, and a thrill of awe and joy passed through their souls, and courage revived in the hearts of the timid among them, who, since the death of their Lord, had been roaming about like sheep that have lost their shepherd.

He is risen! The persecutors and murderers of the Messiah heard it, and were terror-stricken. They refused to believe in the miracle. They endeavored to put it down by audacious falsehood. They asserted that his disciples had stolen away the dead body. But in vain was their clamor! The living Christ appeared before his followers; He appeared in the land of Galilee. He is risen! cried the exultant heavens; and all times, all centuries to come, will repeat the joyful cry.

My soul also rejoices that he is risen. His triumph is my triumph; his victory over death and the grave is also mine; his life is my life. The festival of his wonderful resurrection from the grave and from corruption is also the memorial feast of my future elevation above the world and death, when the corruptible shall put on incorruption, and the mortal the immortal.

His resurrection completed the work of the Messiah on earth. He had lived, taught, and performed good deeds; the holy seed of God was sown, but the soil was still untilled, the growth of the seed uncertain. Christ was still misjudged by many; the purpose of his coming was not understood, even by his most intimate friends. They hoped that He had come to found an earthly throne; to restore the kingdom of David; to free them from the dominion of Rome; to establish the rule and the power of the Jews over all

the nations of the earth. This was their hope. Yet the Messiah had said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

He was doomed to suffering and death, to seal the truth of his doctrine with his blood, to fall a willing victim for the sins of the world, and to bring the sacrificial worship of the Hebrews to an end by his death. He suffered the death of the World-Redeemer. His blood was, as it were, required to make the seeds of godliness germinate, which he had sown in the rough soil of the human heart.

But his work was not finished. With Him died the courage of his first followers.

Their bright dreams of earthly power and splendor were destroyed, and with them also their hopes and prospects.

His death had rendered incomprehensible to them what he had taught and prophesied. The life of the Messiah had become a mystery to them, their own destination a secret. That which had been begun was not completed, but was broken off. Gloomy doubts obscured their souls, as the night of the sepulchre hid the corpse of their Divine Master.

Just then the tidings broke upon them: He is risen! And, lo! a new day dawned upon them. The mystery that clothed his words was at once solved; they comprehended his prophecies; they understood his divinity. Full of holy enthusiasm, they responded to his call. Now, shame and honor, life and death, were as naught to them when compared to the message He had given them to deliver. The seed of God, which He had sown, began to sprout vigorously. His resurrection acted on it like the breath of spring. Death had vanished; hell was van-

quished ; humanity was reconciled to God ; the heavenly kingdom of spirits was founded ; He had finished ! Thus the festival of the resurrection of Jesus became the first and most sacred festival of the Christians, and at the same time a memorial feast of their own redemption, through Jesus. Let us keep the feast, said they ; let us do it in remembrance of the purification from sin, of which we are made capable, through his word ; let us cast away every vicious tendency that desecrates us. For as a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, so doth the smallest sin dishonor and desecrate the whole dignity of man. “ Therefore, let us keep the feast,” cries St. Paul, “ not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” (1 Cor. v. 8.)

As Jesus finished his task, so will I finish mine. As he completed the redemption of a world from the fetters of sin and error, so will I complete my sanctification through faith in Him and in his word. If his life be my life, then also is his victory my victory, his glorification my glorification, — then shall I not taste death. My spirit shall soar triumphantly above the grave and the dust of earth, towards heaven.

I will seek redemption through Jesus, for in no one else is there salvation. To be redeemed through Him is to become like unto Him ; to be pure in mind, and to do good ; to be free from every sin, and to live for God alone ; to act in my appointed sphere with god-like nobleness of soul, without selfishness, without base motives ; to recognize in the world of spirits my home, in the Creator of the boundless universe my Father, and my kindred in all created beings like myself, who lie worshiping at his feet ; to seek my

happiness, not in the dust and in the fleeting things of this earth, but in eternity.

Christ has risen from the dead ; He has finished his work. I also shall rise again, and shall complete my work. If I live in the spirit of Jesus, the grave has no terrors for me. The grave can only hold my corpse ; my corpse is dust and ashes ; dust and ashes in themselves have no life ; but the soul is life ; therefore my soul cannot die.

Cannot die ? Not so ! Did not Jesus himself say, " Fear not those who would kill the body, but those who would kill the soul " ? And what is the death of the soul ? Sin.

Where there is sin, there the lusts of the body prevail ; there reason is silent ; there the conscience is stifled ; there the activity of the spirit is paralyzed ; there is death. Sin is the death of the spirit. In like manner as a dead human body is insensible to all influences that may be brought to bear upon it, so is the spirit when vice has conquered. As the dead body is without strength, so also the spirit loses its power when the brute instincts are triumphant. As the dead body is without a will, so also the spirit loses all freedom, where passions, such as worldly ambition, luxuriousness, voluptuousness, covetousness, and malice, prevail.

Therefore is sin the death of the spirit ! And can a spirit, that has not lived a true life on earth, continue to live when its body dies ? Does it not sleep the eternal sleep ? Will it not be as if it had never existed ?

It is from that death that Jesus has rescued us by his doctrine, not from the death of the body. This death we must all die. But when we sanctify our-

selves, that is, when we purify ourselves from all vicious tendencies, from all animal and sinful desires, our spirits imbibe eternal life in vigorous draughts. The death of the body is not the death of the soul. If, then, a perfect soul, after the example of Jesus, does not die, of what importance is the decay of our bodies? We live! what matters it that the earthly coil which clings to us should fall away? We live, and live through the word of Jesus; and we may exclaim with rapture: Where is thy sting, O death? O hell, where is thy victory? Praised be God, who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

If sin be the death of the soul, then virtue, or likeness to God, must be its life. Every infraction of the divine laws is a death-wound inflicted on the spirit, and every deed pleasant in the sight of God is a quickening of our spiritual life.

And thus I understand when it is said, that the wages of sin are death! When it is said, that Christ saved us from death, by showing us the way of life. Yes; He has saved us from death, by showing us the way of life; by pointing out to us our high destination, and teaching us to know our own dignity; by affording us the surest means to reach perfection, his own example; and by bidding us deny ourselves and our sinful desires, and follow Him. Therefore, using figurative language, He called himself our way to life.

Christ has risen! He has finished gloriously his divine mission; he has conquered death for me, if in my life I do show forth his merits and his holiness, and avoid sin, which is spiritual death.

As Christ had not finished until his task on earth

was completed, until the grave and death had been conquered, until his disciples had been consecrated, and He had returned to his Father ; so shall I not have finished until I have reached the end of my career. As long as I remain on earth, my existence will be a constant wrestling with sin, a constant struggle with death. Not until I have reached the end will it be proved whether my spirit has conquered death and sin, whether I have fought the good fight, whether I have won the promised palm of life. How long shall this struggle still endure ? When shall I rejoice in my victory over death and sin ?

However long it may be, I will hold fast my faith, and shall not weary. "For he that overcometh, saith the Lord, shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." (Rev. xxi. 7.) And however long my struggle may still endure, the festival of the Messiah's completion of his work shall be to me a reminder of the victory I also must win. Ah, that I might be able each time I celebrate thy victory, O Saviour, to celebrate also my triumph over death and sin !

Blessed are ye, O glorified spirits, who have already overcome ! O ye beloved of Jesus ! ye saints of God ! in solemn silence I will celebrate the memory of your triumph also. Ye have fought the fight ; I am still wrestling with sin. Ye are rejoicing, having reached the goal ; I am still weeping at my shortcomings.

Blessed are ye, ye have conquered death in Jesus, and with Jesus ! The resurrection of the Lord became your resurrection. He has risen ; he lives ; and ye live with Him.

He lives ! He is risen ! The heavenly assurance that this gives us, that we also shall rise from the

dead, quickens the wounded hearts of the disconsolate mourners who despair at their lost joys. To us also God has promised immortal life ; our souls shall not be victims of the grave.

He lives ! He is risen ! O disconsolate father, why walkest thou so sad and unsympathizing among thy fellow-men, seeking the child of whom death has robbed thee ? O mother, why dost thou weep on the tomb of thy darling, calling him by his name, and asking the silent and mysterious grave to give him back to thee ? Why, O mourners, do ye seek the living among the dead ? Those ye love are not there ; they are in the bosom of the Father ! Celebrate cheerfully the Easter festival. It is the festival of the Resurrection, and of the remembrance of our victory over death. Father, mother, think of this ! There is no wall of separation between life and eternity ; there is no real separation from those ye so tenderly loved. Your child lives. Ye also shall live hereafter, for Jesus lives, God lives. There is no death, except through sin.

He lives ! he is risen ! Unhappy husband, why pinest thou to descend into the silent tomb, where she sleeps who was thy noblest possession on earth, thy all in all ? Her dust rests there, it is true. But why seekest thou the living among the dead ? The grave is not the home of her spirit, which was born to eternal life. Its home is in the bosom of God. God is with you ; how, then, are you separated ? She lives, and thou livest, and God embraces you both. Fight out thy fight, O mourner ! the apparent separation will not be for long. Celebrate cheerfully the Easter festival. It is the feast of the Resurrection, and of our own victory over death.

He lives ! He is risen ! Yet thou, O lonely widow, thou still lamentest with stubborn grief over thy departed husband ? Thou, O desolate maiden, askest the grave to give up the loved one whom it tore from thy bleeding heart ? Thou, brother, still grieveest for the sister who faded in early youth ? Thou, sister, weepest bitter tears over a brother gone to rest ? Whom seek ye, then, in the grave, my friends ? Why seek ye the living among the dead ? They are not there ; they are with God. Celebrate cheerfully and trustingly the Easter festival, — the festival of the Resurrection, and of our victory over death.

Christ lives ! He is risen ! I also shall live and be with God. Jesus' resurrection is my resurrection, because his life is to be my life. We are not the prey of the grave ! O ye who have already overcome, and ye who will one day overcome, we are all God's children ? Why should we despair ?

O'er earth and time, my soul mount high,
O'er death and o'er mortality,
 Upraise thee, trembling soul.
Thy fatherland is there, in heaven ;
The resurrection was but given
 To lead thee to thy goal.
E'en here, amidst the wreck of death,
The higher nature gleams beneath.

Dry leaves are all thou look'st on here,
'T is dust of dust that fills the bier, —
 Thy brother's earthly shell.
The fragile shell may broken be,
And waste away ; but not o'er thee
 Prevails the grave's dark spell.
Free from the burden of life's pain,
Thy high reward awaits thee then.

The father's love thou then wilt see,
His love will comprehended be,
 His foresight wilt thou reach.

Creation's vast unbounded scheme,
The countless myriad worlds that gleam
 Will all his wisdom teach.
Bright midst the starry host divine
Shall the new earth and heaven outshine.

Then, full of joy and reverence deep,
To-day thy resurrection keep
 With Christ, — thy life, thy light.
The blessed hope of Heaven regained,
The endless, Godlike life attained,
 In his own holy height.
Was not Christ's coming but for this:
Man to perfect, and win us bliss ?

THE TRIUMPH OF HOLINESS.

He left, with honor crowned, his rock-hewn tomb,
And God was reconciled to man. The gloom,
The curse, from Mount Sinai has passed by.
Instead of death, he gave us life above;
Instead of wrath, he gave us heavenly love,
And confidence through his own victory.
He, He alone, fulfilled it in that hour, —
The work of grace, of mercy, and of power:
All praise unto the resurrection be!
Death may appear,
We know no fear,
O Death-Destroyer, for we follow Thee!

Shout, shout aloud to God with joyful voice!
Let the whole universe in praise rejoice,
The conquest has been gained, the battle 's done.
All that was dim and doubtful is made clear,
God's will is spoken so that all may hear,
He, the Most Holy, has the victory won.
Shall I not, then, with stronger courage bear
The galling weight of earthly grief and care?
Can what God loveth ever be cast down?
Raise thine eyes
Unto the skies
And know, the Eternal cannot be o'erthrown.

(ROM. viii. 23.)

AFTER the death of Jesus, his disciples fled in fear and trembling. They sought solitude to weep over the death of their Divine Master, and also concealment from the sanguinary cruelty of the Jews. And in the first bitterness of their sorrow at the loss of their dearly beloved friend, many doubts probably arose in their breast. I seem to hear their complaints: "Jesus, our Divine Master, fell a victim to

cruel murderers. How could God forsake the beloved One who called himself his Son? How could the Most Holy allow the base multitude to point the finger of scorn at the Holy One? Who will venture to be virtuous and just, if virtue and justice lead to the felon's doom, while vice triumphs and prospers? Is there a Judge on high, and yet He is silent? Is there an all-loving God in the universe, and yet He permits the innocent to suffer painfully for deeds of which he has not been guilty? Permits him to suffer without succor, without alleviation, without consolation? Does God dissever the sacred bonds of love which his own hand has woven, and does He leave hearts to bleed to death of wounds which have been inflicted because they trusted in Him?"

But on the third day the strange rumor spread through the land: The Crucified has risen! The unjust rulers, the murderers, were seized with terror; but endeavored to allay their fears by doubts and denial. The friends of Jesus heard the tidings, and, though still doubting, they were filled with gladness. They afterwards beheld their Master like one glorified, and with feelings of devotional joy and awe they stammered forth, "My Lord and my God!" (John xx. 28.) Holiness had triumphed.

Jesus had won the great victory; his innocence had triumphed gloriously over all his past sufferings; the Divine character of his revelations was made wonderfully manifest to those who still required such a test. Treachery, persecution, crucifixion, death, and the grave had proved of no avail. They had only been permitted that they might swell the triumph of the eternal Son. And thus, in this superlative instance also, we behold, as in a great picture, the manifesta-

tion of the blissful truth, which the Holy Scriptures hold forth to us to this day: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." (Rom. viii. 28.) That which is holy must ultimately be triumphant.

But what is holiness in the spiritual world? I will tell thee. It is immaculate purity! It is that which maintains itself in its native simplicity without any admixture of things which do not belong to it. Therefore, that mind must be called holy in which only the purest virtue dwells, and no passion, no tendency to sin. Consequently, the spirit may be said to be sanctified when it is unstained by anything earthly, when it is not swayed by the influences of the body, but determines and guides itself solely by its indwelling Divine laws. Such a spirit is sure of attaining the highest good; it approaches daily towards perfection. Purity is indestructible, eternal; only that which is mixed, compounded of various elements, is perishable, for it ultimately dissolves again into the elements of which it is composed.

This truth holds good of the living and of the dead. It is a law of nature. Everything in the world which we perceive through our senses is composed of simple substances. As soon as these combine, their purity is alloyed. But when, as compound substances, they are destroyed, they immediately return to their primitive purity. Thus gold is valuable in proportion to its purity. In vain is every attempt to destroy it by fire. The ashes of burnt wood can never again become wood; but gold, when subjected to the action of fire, only throws off the dross that is mixed with it, and comes out of the crucible purer and more valuable than before. The same is the case with a holy

mind when it passes through the purifying fire of earthly tribulation. It throws off the sensuous desire for honors, wealth, and other enjoyments, which may still cling to it, and comes forth purer and holier, and with intensified consciousness of its own spotlessness.

Holiness wins the victory. The history of all times and all nations proclaims it. Many errors have prevailed since the beginning of the world; but they disappear gradually as men learn to know truth. *No error can endure forever; while, on the other hand, since the beginning of time no truth has ever perished.* Each truth acquired is handed down from generation to generation as a precious treasure, and one century inherits it from another. No doubt it may at times be obscured by passing errors, as is the sun by passing clouds. But the clouds are no part of the sun, and truth remains ever distinct from error. It has, therefore, each time come forth the more majestically from out of the dark mists of ignorance. Human violence may indeed do much to impede its progress, — may silence men's tongues by fear, so that they venture not to declare the truth, and may persecute it even unto death. But it lives on in noble minds, though all lips be mute; for though tongues may be restrained, thought cannot be coerced. The spirit is free within the realm of thought. It scorns the impotence of man; and on the grave of many a persecutor, Truth has, with undying energy, once more reared her divine banner.

Holy as truth is goodness. The history of the world bears witness to it. The good that has happened on earth has been followed by blessed and lasting consequences. For only that which is good and just is in harmony with nature and with the soul.

Evil, on the contrary, is in antagonism with the entire creation. Crime has indeed often been clad in royal purple, and has often trampled on innocence with impunity. But the purple has mouldered away, the crime remained a crime, and from the blood of the persecuted innocence has arisen a triumphant avenger. In vain vice sharpened its murderous axe, and doomed virtue to die in the flames; though trembling cowards burnt incense before the ruthless tyrant, the sinner's pride was soon laid low, and the funeral pile of slandered innocence was changed into a throne of glory.

For this reason the memory of wise and virtuous men has ever been revered, even by very remote posterity. They have been the benefactors of entire nations and of generations of men; but being misjudged and scorned either by the ignorance or malice of their contemporaries, they have too frequently been the victims of their own goodness, and of the barbarity of others. But was the cause for which they fought therefore extinguished? No; that which was holy remained ultimately triumphant. With calm consciousness of the good they had bestowed upon the world, the noble spirits of these victims of human oppression rose purified and exultant to heaven, there to receive a more glorious palm of victory than could be won on earth. What did they lose by being misjudged by the world? In carrying out their virtuous purposes they thought not of the world's applause, but acted spontaneously, urged on by their inward instincts and aspirations. They were consoled by their firm conviction that they were accomplishing that which would tend to increase the happiness of mankind, and which would never be destroyed. And they

did not deceive themselves. For that which is holy ever triumphs ; and posterity names with a blessing the men whom their contemporaries condemned.

The remembrance hereof ought to strengthen and elevate our minds, and to inspire us with courage and unswerving determination to act so as to gain the approval of God. In like manner as the wisest and noblest among our predecessors ever moved onward with their eyes fixed upon God, and trusting in the righteousness of their cause, so let us also uphold the cause which we consider good and just, and likely to diffuse happiness, though the base multitude may scoff at us, and accuse us of low and selfish motives, and persecute and ill-treat us ; for that which is holy will ultimately gain the victory !

Be Thou my example, O Christ, Friend of man ; Thou, who in the great battle with fate didst not allow Thyself to be led away from the divine path by temptations or by threats ; but didst persevere in love and well-doing, though surrounded by hatred and persecution, — be Thou my example in action.

Be Thou also my example in patient suffering, Thou greatest of sufferers, who, when forsaken by all, when betrayed by thy bosom friend, when thine enemies rejoiced openly at thy fall, when thy most faithful followers fled from before Thee, and the most zealous denied Thee, — still remained meek and humble, unshaken in thy sublime grandeur of soul, in thy heavenly virtue.

And be my example, my strengthener in hope, Saviour, risen from the dead, who, in the majesty of thy victory, didst annihilate the powers of evil that arose against Thee, blessed the world, gloriously rewarded the devotion of thy beloved disciples, and be-

held the heavens opening to receive thee, while the nations of the earth lay worshiping at thy feet.

That which is holy ever remains triumphant ; therefore be holy. Only that which is impure decays and perishes ; therefore avoid all that is impure ! Has the voice of God, speaking through the marvels of nature, through human events, and through the holy words of revealed religion, no power over thy heart ?

Be holy ; that is, be *pure*. Beware not to let sensual influences obtain too great a hold over thy mind, and whatever thou undertakest, let it never be for the sake of earthly reward. Do the good that thou art able to do, or that thou mayest wish to do, without any hope of reaping honors or riches in return. If thou lookest for such return, oh, verily, then thou dost but make virtue the tool of thy baseness, and thou must be counted among those of whom the Saviour said, “ They have their reward ! ” Love thy fellow-beings ; help them with a good-will whenever thou canst do so ; alleviate misery as far as it lies in thy power ; speak well of others whenever an opportunity offers ; promote useful undertakings even when commenced by others ; but do all this, not in order to make thyself beloved in return, not in order to win a reputation, but because thou art convinced that what thou dost is right and good, that the deed is worthy of thee, that through it thou manifestest that perfection which thine own conscience, thy God, and thy Saviour demand of thee. In acting thus, thou wilt keep thyself pure from gross earthly influences, thou wilt sanctify thy mind.

Go forth and arrest the evil that others may be planning ; comfort the unhappy whose misfortunes thou canst not prevent ; try to promote the interests

even of those who may have sought to injure thee; convince thine enemy, by thy generous acts towards him, that he has formed an erroneous opinion of thee; but do not these things from fear, but from a sense of duty, from the feeling that a true Christian cannot think and act otherwise. Then thy deed will be free from impure earthly alloy, and will be solely the fruit of the spirit called to immortality and perfection. To do thus is to approach the goal of holiness; and that which is holy is triumphant at last! Therefore persevere without ceasing in thy pure aspirations, and do not allow thyself to be led astray by any apparent disadvantages, by any personal annoyance, by any humiliations which thou mayest be subjected to in consequence. He who is incapable of such strength and elevation of soul, he will remain lost among the crowd of vulgar minds, and will deserve the ruin which he will bring upon himself by his weakness and his vacillation.

All men respect in others that firmness of mind and strength of principle which are proof against every fate; yea, even in bad men, we cannot at times help admiring the extraordinary determination and inflexibility with which they advance towards the end they have marked out for themselves. Only those persons can with truth be called contemptible who have no power over themselves, who are honest to-day, base to-morrow, who are ever vacillating between virtue and vice, sinning and repenting, and who never attain to any kind of self-dependence. We despise them, because in them there is no decided purity of will. One day they set virtue aside for fear of exposing themselves to the malicious observations of senseless worldlings, another day they follow virtue

because they think that more honor is to be won in this way than in following sin. But they succumb, for only that which is pure and holy ultimately triumphs in life. They fight no real fight against the power and influences of the senses, for their vacillations testify that they are but helpless tools of their own passions. In none of the circumstances of life do they show any will or spirit of their own ; what, then, can remain of them when in death they lose the body, which, with its earthly lusts, ruled them ?

Only that which is holy triumphs ! Remember, O soul, the majesty of Him who has risen from the dead ! When men conspire against thy higher principles, and give thee in return for the good thou hast achieved, not gratitude, but the curse of envy, of jealousy, and malice, — remember Him ! Adversity is only a test of thy courage, a trial of the strength of thy virtue. It is easy during a lovely summer evening to profess indifference to the inclemency of the weather, or while resting in the lap of peace to boast of the prowess we should give proof of were we to encounter an enemy ; but it is in bearing up against storm and rain, and the sudden changes of the temperature, that the strong man shows his hardiness, and it is amid the sanguinary horrors of the battlefield that the hero proves his courage.

He who has made up his mind to act purely and nobly, that is to say, to think, and speak, and act according to his best convictions, must be prepared to encounter many vexatious obstacles to the carrying out of his good intentions. For if all that is good and useful met with no impediments, his arm and his heart would not be required to promote it.

Whoever determines to do his best in life, accord-

ing to his convictions, — to be just, fair in all his dealings, truthful, and zealous for the public weal, — must be prepared to find numbers of persons endeavoring to oppose him. Many, simply because, being of an envious disposition, they hate everything that is praiseworthy which they have not themselves projected or accomplished; others, because your efforts may possibly be opposed to some selfish plan of theirs, cherished in secret; some, again, because, being themselves without any inward worth, they are unable to conceive that others are better than themselves, and therefore attribute base sentiments even to the best of men, and believe that the most upright acts are dictated by selfish motives; again, many will oppose you, not because their intentions are less good than your own, but because their views are totally different, owing to their education, their temperament, their outward circumstances and experiences of life being different; others, though they may do full justice to the purity of your intentions, will resist you, because they consider you a mere enthusiast.

But if your convictions are well founded, if you have tried them by the test of your conscience, and conceive them to be in accordance with the will of God, and you know them to be *pure* from every admixture of passion, — if you firmly believe what you propound to be truth, or what you undertake to be for the benefit of the world, — then do not hesitate to remain faithful to yourself! For it is eternally true, that to them that love God, all things work for good. Every obstacle will but stimulate you to greater exertion, and will prevent you from relaxing in your efforts; every contradiction, every objection, will make you reflect, and perhaps turn your atten-

tion to points on which you have erred, or on which you might otherwise have gone too far. These impediments will therefore serve to purify your principles from all earthly dross, and render your triumph the more glorious.

And should the storms that assail thee prove too violent, and thy courage and thy strength threaten to give way, oh, then think of Him who is risen ! God was with Christ, and God is with every noble soul in its greatest tribulations on earth ; God is with thee, because thou seekest Him ! It is possible that thou mayest fail ; but what wilt thou lose ? Perhaps the fame of the moment, perhaps thy earthly life. But of what importance are these ? Do these things affect the sublime and immortal essence in thee which we call spirit ? Nay, they are but of the earth, earthy, and in every case vanish in death. Remain faithful to thyself to the end ! The good man may fail, the good cause never !

That which is holy is triumphant at last. Jesus, Thou who art risen from the dead ; Messiah, wonderful, glorified, majestic Victor over life and death, the halo which surrounds thy grave teaches me to see and to love this great truth. Thou also hast triumphed, and century proclaims it to century with exultant joy ; and the human race, blessed through Thee, worship Thee.

Little did thy contemporaries think, whilst Thou wert living among them humbly and misjudged, that thy name would become the object of the world's love and reverence. Little did they think, when Thou wert preaching the highest and most sacred truths with Divine power and simplicity, that the words spoken by Thee in remote places, to a small band of followers,

would resound through hundreds of years from the lips of millions of men, in all languages, in splendid temples and in desert caves, in the palaces of kings and in the hovels of the poor. Little did they think when thou wert nailed, bleeding, to the cross, between two malefactors, and drew thy last sigh amid the scoffs of the malignant multitude, when the faithful doubted, and thy beloved ones fled in dismay; little did they think that this cross would become the symbol of thy Godlike services to the human race, and would be raised as such in the burning deserts of the tropics, on the ice-fields of the far north whither no warm sunbeams ever penetrate, on the shores of unknown seas, and on the cloud-capped summits of high mountains.

But, strengthened by thy victory, and filled with the Holy Ghost, thy disciples spread through all parts of the world, and proclaimed to the astonished nations the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. In spite of torture, chains, sword, and cross, they completed the great work of the redemption of the world. They fell victims to their zeal, many of them breathed their last under fearful sufferings; but their cause was triumphant!

And I, Jesus Messiah, I will do as they! I will purify myself of every evil tendency, of every weakness; I will stand forth in word and deed as a perfect man, who prizes thy word and thy truth above all things. When occasion offers for serving my fellow-men, I will not first selfishly consider what would be to my own advantage, nor timidly give up what duty bids me do, because of the obstacles and the trouble I may have to encounter. In the end I shall succeed. And my reward I carry in my bosom; for that which is holy will triumph!

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LIFE AND ETERNITY.

When, after a few fleeting hours are past,
Thy will is fully perfected in me,
My earthly burden is removed at last,
And from the chains of sin my soul set free, —
The last sad tear that earth can claim is shed,
And “dust to dust,” I rest among the dead, —

How shall I to myself, for joy, be known,
When the dark veil is taken from mine eyes?
When the bright angel brotherhood shall own,
And my glance pierces heaven’s mysteries?
And what was sacred held from mortal sight,
To the freed spirit is revealed in light.

Here, ere Thou cam’st thy hidden ways to teach,
My boasted wisdom was an idle dream, —
Of all the countless joys my soul shall reach,
My searching gaze can scarcely catch a gleam;
Yet I, confiding in thy truth, believe,
What *Thou* hast promised, *that* shall I receive.

Mercy of God! without or mark or bound,
The heavens have not sufficient tongues to praise,
Nor words of worth enough our thanks to sound
For that Thou lend’st thy light to guide our ways.
One single ray from Thee outshineth far
The sun and moon, and every glittering star.

(REVELATION xiv. 13.)

THE year is but a quick succession of brief moments. Who is conscious of the infinitesimal part of life that is comprised within each of these infinitesimal periods of time, and which vanishes even while I am thinking of it? When a year has elapsed, even this longer period, on looking back, seems to us

but as a moment. It was here ; it is gone ; and it will never come again.

The day passes speedily by. Another and another follows, and passes as quickly. The duration of a moment is but that of the twinkling of an eye ; and what are weeks, months, and years other than a succession of such moments, which I comprise under one name ?

In all things I find constant changes going on, and yet all, in fact, remain ever the same. Thousands and thousands of years ago, all was as it is now. The mutable is ever comprised in the immutable ; the fleeting in the enduring. I distinguish minutes, weeks, months. But it is only the human understanding that separates and makes distinctions, and applies different names. In reality, all are one and the same time. What I denominate the seasons are but the varying positions assumed towards the sun by the globe which I inhabit. Time is immutable.

And though all things seem infinitely varied, nevertheless, one thing is but a consequence of another ; and each is intimately connected and identical with all.

All things must, by the closest concatenation, be joined into ONE, for there is but one universe. There are not two universes differing in organization, or opposed to each other. There is but ONE God, whose wisdom and laws originated all existence as a UNITY, as an integral, consisting of many integrant parts.

Now if all things be but parts of a whole, and there be but one Creator of the whole, and each one thing be indestructibly linked to all others, how can you speak of time and eternity as if you were speaking of two distinct universes ?

How senseless would it not be to suppose that the life we enjoy one day is distinct from that of the next, because the days are separated by the shadows of night. Who imagines, because in autumn plants wither and return to dust and earth, that with the new spring, when vegetation recommences, a new world, so to say, begins! There is nothing different from what has been; all is again the same as it was, eternally the same.

Dost thou think that when the plant withers, and its dust is dispersed by the wind, the component parts of that which was a plant have been blown out of the universe, and have been reduced to absolute nothingness? Nay, whether united in a plant, or scattered as motes in a sunbeam, they are present and indestructible, irremovable from the universe of God. The hidden power of life, which combined this dust into verdant, blooming plants, also continues apart from the dust, and in winter as in summer works actively in the seeds, in the universe. When the sun of spring reproduces the conditions laid down by the Creator, according to which the vital force acts upon the elementary substances around it, this action recommences, and new plants germinate, and put forth buds and leaves and blossoms. Thus every new thing is ever a reproduction of the old; ever the same, however new it may appear to the eye of man.

In the universe there is nothing new; and nothing old is annihilated. What we call new and old are mere distinctions, made by our understanding, means to help our feeble powers of conception. In reality there is in nature nothing new and nothing old, for God's creation is eternal. It is only the relations of

things to one another that change, and these changes are what we call temporal. Whether a flower withers and dies, and is dissolved into dust and vapor, or whether some world, inhabited by millions of beings, is destroyed and reduced to dust, it is the same thing. Neither the component parts of the flower nor of the world can escape from the universe of God. It is only their relations to each other that have undergone a change. We make a difference between the flower and the world, because relatively to our bodies the one seems to us very small, the other immense; but to the infinite and omnipresent God, nothing is small, and nothing is great. Therefore is the most insignificant worm and the most powerful of mortals on this earth of equal importance to Him. His providence and his love embrace both alike, as being his creatures.

We must beware not to persuade ourselves into believing that that which we can see with our limited sight, measure with our small standard, and comprehend with our restricted faculties, within our circumscribed sphere of life and space, is exactly such as we conceive it to be. We make distinctions where in nature, strictly speaking, none exist. To us, that which is invisible, and beyond the sphere of our comprehension on earth, is as if it were not. There is nothing whatsoever extant on earth of which the elementary substances were not previously in the air, in the form of impalpable and invisible particles. The whole globe which we mortals inhabit has been formed out of components of the atmosphere. From the air water is precipitated; from the air the plants receive their constituent elements; from the air and the plants the animals receive theirs, and man his from

all. Mountains, forests, oceans, etc. are all, as it were, children of the air, and may again be dissolved into air. All are one.

All are one. Therefore are all things so closely linked together that the single links are often indistinguishable. In the eternal universe there is no yesterday and to-day, — these only exist for us mortals, who inhabit the little planet called the earth, which by revolving round the sun causes a fleeting alternation of light and shade, cold and heat, which we call days and seasons. In the eternal universe there is no beginning and no ending, but only a constant play of relations, and this is what we call life; but eternal as the things themselves, as all God's works, are also their varying relations to each other. Consequently there is an uninterrupted reticulation of life. The particular relations of certain parts may cease, but the substances of forces themselves can never cease to be; and as little can the constant variations of relations, that is, life, cease to be. That which seems to us as a beginning and an ending, as a blooming and fading, as morning and evening, that which we call birth and death, old and young, is only the varying play of the relations of things in the universe, or the life of the creation. That which we call death is therefore in itself a confirmation of life, an act of life, and life itself!

Time and eternity are the same to God. But they are likewise so to me. Why make this distinction? There is but *one* Eternal. After death I shall be in eternity, but I am already in it. After death I shall be with God; but here below already I live and move and have my being in God.

However, with that intensified vital action, which

we call death, an active process of separation and renewed combination takes place in all my component parts. As in autumn the vital force leaves the withering plant, so in death the spiritual part of my being withdraws from the earthly part. That within me, which I call my real self, and which is capable of conceiving God, enters into combinations with other substances and things in the life-teeming universe. But my discarded body, which returns to dust, also continues in God's universe and enters into other combinations. And I, the God-conscious, I, the conceiving and perceiving spirit, I also, like the dust of my body, shall continue through all eternity.

Am I a different being to-day to what I was yesterday, because I have put on other garments? No; for though I may yesterday have worn an inferior dress, and to-day wear a better one, I am nevertheless the same being. And as little as the raiment which I wear forms part of myself, as little does the body form part of the spirit, which in death puts it off. But the same as I have been while clad in the body, the same shall I be after having entered into other combinations. For I am and remain the same spirit, in like manner as my body remains the same dust.

Consequently, from the brief space of time which we call earthly life, I pass over into the higher or lower, happier or unhappier, relations into which I may hereafter enter, a worthy or unworthy spirit, according as I may have proved myself in this world. And thus are fulfilled the words of Scripture: "Their works do follow them."

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may

have rest from their labors ; and their works do follow them." (Rev. xiv. 13.)

Our works do follow us, because between time and eternity there is an intimate and indissoluble connection ; more intimate, indeed, than that between the drops of the sea and the sea itself. The whole system of created things is but one ; and therefore living in time, I am living in eternity ; and living in this world, I am living in the universe, my Father's house, in which I shall live forevermore ; for the connection between the unit and the all, of which it forms an integral part, can never be dissevered.

I know that this indissoluble connection between time and eternity exists, because, not only is the smallest mote dancing in a sunbeam imperishable, but so likewise is my self-conscious spirit, which aspires towards perfection. Things change, yet endure. The circumstances that surround me vary, but I ever remain in the midst of the infinite vital action of the universe. Now if my soul is imperishable, and ever retains its identity, how can the connection between to-day and to-morrow, between the here and the hereafter, between time and eternity, ever be interrupted ? I know that the connection exists, because there is but one God, who has ordained all things, who encompasses all things, who created all things perfect, not as fragments and disjointed parts, but as the intimately connected and closely interwoven parts of a whole, infinitely harmonious in all its causes and effects. And God is my God to-day, as He will be my God when the circumstances of this life no longer surround me, but I shall have entered into other relations and connections.

Therefore blessed are the dead who die in the Lord,

for their works do follow them. They *follow* them, for in the great concatenation of things there are no missing links, no interruptions. One thing proceeds from another ; as in the smallest, so in the greatest ; as in earthly, so in moral and spiritual matters. Whether thou risest or thou fallest, thou takest the place thou hast prepared for thyself ; nothing that is done can be undone. Thy works do follow thee.

There are degraded human beings, very little removed from the brutes, who lack the energy to develop any of their indwelling spiritual capacities. They aspire to nothing better than to be animals, and to satisfy their animal desires. What they hear said about virtue (conformity to the eternal laws of God) seems to them irrational and absurd, or at least they wish to think it so. To be clad in costly apparel, to recline upon soft couches, to live in grand houses, to feast on dainty viands, to drink the best wines, to enjoy ample pecuniary means, to have the power to oppress others and to tower high above them, to possess much worldly knowledge, to be able to calculate cunningly, and to be irresistible in action, — in a word, to be a kind of perfect animal, such is their highest ambition. Of more exalted things they have no conception, so utterly degraded are they. If you tell them that it is their duty to sacrifice all earthly things for the good of their souls, for the acquisition of true nobleness of spirit, they look upon you as insane.

Such men as these (in their innermost hearts they are generally unhappy) are very much inclined, if they cannot deny the Creator, or refuse to see Him in his creation, at least to deny the eternal, all-pervading laws of virtue. They would fain persuade them-

selves that God takes no heed of our actions, that piety and goodness are inventions of the schools, mere prejudices instilled in childhood, and intended to keep people in due subjection to their rulers. That which is useful they deem expedient, and that which is expedient they consider wise and good. Whatever is for their worldly advantage they pronounce right ; what injures them is, in their eyes, wrong ; and they hold all means justifiable which enable them to attain their end.

Nevertheless they are dismayed when they perceive that though there are various religions in the world, yet virtue is the same among all nations. There is consequently something stable and unvarying in the human spirit, which relates to its destiny, its mode of thinking and acting, and according to which it judges itself, and is judged by others. Virtue (which is conformity to the will of God) is consequently not a shifting, accidental thing. A pious and righteous man is honored in all countries, by civilized and uncivilized nations, and he is trusted far more than are shrewd and clever men. On the other hand, a selfish villain, without faith or belief, who puts no restraint upon himself, is detested by all. Thus it is now, and thus it was thousands of years ago. State constitutions, church ceremonies, languages, customs, science, ideas as to what is useful and what is injurious, have altered ; but the laws of God in the sphere of the spiritual, the laws and ideas relating to piety and virtue, are as old as the human race itself. Virtue is as indispensable to the immortal spirit as food is to the mortal body. Withdraw all nourishment from the body, and it perishes ; withdraw virtue from the spirit, and it perishes.

If righteousness be but an accidental thing, if it be not in immediate connection with the nature of the spirit, why is it that even the boldest decriers of virtue are frequently reluctant to commit actual crimes, independently of any fear of punishment in this world? Why is it that there are things which they dare not do? Or why is it that when they do perpetrate bad deeds, they would fain, if they could, conceal them even from themselves?

Virtue is but the perfection of the spirit, its mature development in regard to its destination in the universe. The dying sinner is therefore an immature yet rotting fruit on the great tree of life. Virtue, or perfection of the spirit, is, however, nothing more than its self-emancipation from the trammels of the earthly nature connected with it, — its emancipation from the animal instincts, its self-government according to its own inward and eternal law of right, and of obedience to God; a rising from animal nature to angelic nature. Virtue is the spirit's self-elevation to glory.

It is not, therefore, skill in art or handicraft, nor the power of cleverly calculating events and turning circumstances to account, nor deep learning, nor extensive knowledge, that constitute true greatness of soul, but piety and virtue! That which is useful to the world in which we are at present living will remain here when we quit it. It was derived from this world, was suited for it, and will remain in it. But the virtue which sacrifices life and all earthly goods to carry out the will of God, the virtue that abstains from the things of this world, is not meant to remain in this world, and is often in antagonism with it: it is not of this earth, earthy, for it is in conflict with

all that is earthly, and conquers the power of the world. Virtue, consequently, belongs exclusively to the spirit; and it is the source of those holy works which follow the righteous.

The virtue that denies the world does not belong to the *here*, but to the *hereafter*. It is not born of this earth, but comes from God. Its effects are therefore not limited to this world, but extend through all eternity. All else may be rewarded on earth; but virtue in itself is above all reward. And whatever is done for the sake of reward is not virtue, but an act of earthly expediency. The righteous do not act for the sake of the profit to be derived in this world; their eyes are fixed on eternity. They aspire after perfection, after life in God, and with God. Thus they live, and thus they sleep away in the Lord, without any thought of the pains and pleasures, the praise or blame of this world. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for their works do follow them."

It is the hand of the Almighty and Everlasting God that has linked together time and eternity; where, then, is the power that can deny or destroy this evident and indisputable connection?

My heart thrills with pleasure at the thought which Jesus, the holy Revealer of God, has so distinctly expressed! Time and eternity are one, my here and my hereafter form an uninterrupted whole, as surely as there is but *one* universe, and *one* God, and that my works do follow me.

Blessed, ah, blessed am I, for I will and shall die in the Lord! For who can separate me from the love of God?

Blessed, ah, blessed are they who die in the Lord, for their works do follow them! O my beloved ones

who early departed this life, leaving me behind, you are enjoying the happier lot towards which I am still striving; never did I feel so strongly the connection between life and eternity, as when I stood weeping by the side of your pallid corpses, as when I kissed with burning lips your clay-cold cheeks. Ye died in the Lord and are blessed. Ye belonged to God, and therefore He called you to Him. Alas! He knew and saw what I did not. He witnessed how often ye had struggled with yourselves in secret; how repentant ye were when ye had committed even the smallest fault! How trustfully ye looked up to Him! How ye communed with Him in earnest prayer. Now ye have overcome, and your piety, your innocence, your goodness, your love, do follow you. With forgiving tenderness the merciful Judge looked down upon those errors which his children knew not how to avoid. Ye are not the least of those whom He has taken into his fatherly heart, He who allows not even the worst of sinners to be lost.

Why does my soul sorrow for the dead? O ye blessed ones! I also shall one day, and perhaps very soon, throw off my earthly covering, as ye have thrown off yours, and shall, like you, be clad in more glorious raiment. We shall meet again, we shall be reunited. Love, like virtue, is eternal; for God is love. Similar to the connection between life and eternity is that which exists between loving spirits. I have not entirely lost you, ye dear ones, whom the Lord hath given, and whom He hath taken away. Nay, He hath given you to me, not taken you away; for even to this day we belong to each other. We are all still dwelling in the house of our Father, though in different mansions. I am living in eternity

as are ye, only ye have entered into new relations and connections, which await me also. Life on earth is but a fleeting moment, but eternity endures, and throughout eternity we shall be with each other.

Blessed, yea, blessed are they who die in the Lord, for their works do follow them, and mine also will follow me!

O God of life, Judge of the dead! O merciful Saviour of sinners! my works also will follow me, the evil as the good! I look back with dismay at my past life. How often I may have erred, I do not even know. Lord, Lord, wilt thou remember my offenses? When thou enterest into judgment with me, how shall I stand before thee? The good that was in me was but feebly sustained by my will, and, alas! it was often set at naught by frivolity, thoughtlessness, or passion, while vanity frequently detracted from the merit of my best deeds. How often have I been failing in love, how often in perseverance, how often in meekness and humility.

Save me, O Lord, from the painful discouragement which takes possession of me when I think of my shortcomings and my errors, and of all in which, whether it be in secret or in public, I have offended against Thee and against my fellow-men; for through my own strength alone I shall never attain to that which I ought to be, in accordance with thy will and with the teachings of Jesus. Could I not place my hope and my trust in thy mercy, I should be disconsolate indeed at the thought of the future, and of the change that must come over me in death!

But Thou, O Merciful God, art my comfort and my trust! Accept my will for half the deed, my endeavors for half the success, my conflicts for half the

victory. Forgive me my trespasses ! Thou knowest how often I try to lift myself up, though I fall back each time in helpless impotence !

But perhaps life is but one long struggle against evil, and that he may find mercy before Thee who has had courage enough not to shrink from the combat, but to carry it on to the best of his power.

And I will never weary in this struggle after perfection. As thy soldier I will die, full of faith, and full of hope in thy mercy, O Father, who ever granteth more than we deserve. Amen.

GLORIFICATION AFTER DEATH.

What, then, is mine? What life of bliss?
What quickening stream my dust flows through?
O'er all my limbs what glow is this?
Is it my frame? — I live anew?
Can it be I? Are these my veins?
This Godlike glory, is it mine?
I am not bound in death's cold chains?
Who calls? Whose throne doth yonder shine?
Ah! it is God, — my trust, — my own, —
Messiah, it is Thou alone!

O Lord, thy truth it faileth never,
For life renewed I thank Thee ever.
In revelation's light I soar.
All hail! My foe subdued doth lie,
Death swallowed up in victory,
And in the dust I rest no more.
Hail, Lord! All honor, might, are thine!
Saviour! from Thee my life doth spring.
The angel choir I haste to join,
And loudest hallelujahs sing.

(1 COR. xv. 36-50.)

IF I possess the right of citizenship in two worlds ; if I belong not only to the life here below, but shall hereafter, and perhaps soon, belong to a higher life also ; oh, then it cannot be wrong for me to dwell at times on that which I have to look forward to, and which is ever drawing me towards itself by a feeling of indefinite longing. It is as great a satisfaction to me to occupy my thoughts with the memory of the dear ones that have been separated from me by death, as it is to cultivate intercourse with those who still surround me in life, and are the joy of my existence.

For the former also are still alive, though no longer abiding in earthly form. Though the body perish, the spirit lives. I still love you, ye distant ones, and can I doubt that ye still love me? Nay, spirits whom God hath united, no man can put asunder, neither can the grave.

It is true, that as to what will be my lot, and what I myself shall be on the other side the grave, I am left in ignorance; but it cannot be wrong that I should from time to time occupy my imagination with the subject; that I should endeavor, by comparison with what I experience here below, to divine what may take place hereafter. Here we live as yet by faith, not by sight. But even Jesus spoke in sublime images of the supersensuous state into which we shall enter after the death of the body. His disciples also loved to dwell upon the subject with their followers, or with those among them who entertained doubts as to the possibility of a resurrection of the dead.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body had long been accepted among the Jews. The Pharisees taught it, but in a coarse and sensuous form, maintaining that the same flesh that is consigned to the grave was again necessarily to clothe, and to become the vehicle of, the spirit, — an opinion which was strongly opposed by the Sadducees, another Jewish sect. When called upon to pronounce as to which of the two conflicting opinions was correct, Christ showed that both the Jewish sects were in error on this point; and that immortality, or life in the world beyond the grave, or resurrection after death, would take place without the necessity for a corporeal resurrection, in the coarsely sensual sense in which they understood it; namely, that the soul required a body

to be provided, as before, with all the earthly instincts necessary for its preservation and propagation. The Sadducees felt the truth of his words, and exclaimed, "Master, thou hast well said!" (Luke xx. 27-39.)

That which Jesus but rarely touched upon in public, He seems to have developed more fully in his confidential communings with his disciples; for we find that they entertained the same views as He did as to the state of the spirit after death, and as to the Jewish doctrine of the resurrection. "Thou fool," says St. Paul, "that which thou sowest is not quickened unless it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a *spiritual* body. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." (1 Cor. xv. 36-50.) The human body, composed of earthly substances, will return to earth. It is not capable of eternal life; being corruptible, it cannot inherit the incorruptible. It will rise from the dead a *spiritual body*; that is to say, when our earthly members separate from our higher self, this latter will rise with greater freedom above that which is dead, and as if transfigured, or glorified, will be encompassed by a spiritual covering or body.

This doctrine, embodied in the Holy Scriptures as it was conceived in the spirit of Jesus and his disciples, is in wonderful harmony with what we discern here below as to the nature of man. It is unmistakable that the spirit, while dwelling in the earthly body is endued with a spiritual body, which is freed at the death of the former, and comes forth, as it were, as the blossom does from the seed.

Death is sometimes figuratively called the brother of sleep. And in reality it is so. Sleep is the retirement of the spirit and the soul within themselves, — a withdrawal, so to say, from the outward, coarser parts of the body. The same takes place in death. In sleep, however, the outward members of the flesh, though abandoned by our higher self, continue to be animated by the plant-life. Man lies there insensible, but the blood still flows through the veins ; the lungs still breathe ; all that is essential for the continuance of his plant-like life is in full activity, in the same manner as in the insensible flower or tree. This retirement of the spiritual part of man at regular intervals seems to be necessary for the preservation of the earthly part, as this would otherwise by constant use be, as it were, worn out and rendered less efficient as an instrument of the spirit. If the plant-like life of the human body be left to go on unchecked by the activity of the spirit, it works more uninterruptedly, according to its own laws, and thus acquires new strength. Therefore it is that after every healthy sleep, we find that the body is refreshed and the mind cheered. In death, however, even the plant-life abandons the substances of which the body is composed, and which are held together by this force alone, and in consequence they decay.

Spirit and soul may, on the other hand, have abandoned the body, without the latter being apparently dead, though real death may be truly said to have taken place when the better part of man has left it. But the body breathes, its pulses beat ; and it is said of the man, he is still alive. At other times it may happen that the vital power withdraws from certain parts of the body, and that these die, as it were, while

the spirit and the soul still remain united with the other parts.

Sleep is one of the greatest mysteries connected with human life, and well worthy of our closest and most intelligent observation. But this observation is rendered doubly difficult by the fact, that the observing spirit is, in regard to the matters to be taken cognizance of, subject to the laws of corporeal nature, and must allow these to act without disturbance, in order that they may be restored and strengthened for its use. Sleep may be said to be the nourishment of the vital force. The spirit contributes nothing to this. The vital force is as independent of it as is the digestive process which converts the food of the body into blood, or as is the growth of the hair, or the various secretions that take place in the body. When we are awake, the vital force is consumed, it flows out and acts outwardly; when we are asleep, it is gathered in from without. Therefore, as you will observe, not only men and animals sleep, but also plants, — they close their calyxes, or fold and hang their leaves, when night sets in.

But what is the state of our higher self during its retirement from the outward senses? It can no longer receive impressions from without through eye or ear, through taste, or smell, or sensation. But shall we therefore say that the spirit is annihilated during those moments? Were this so, then our bodies would each morning belong to another spirit, another soul. But the spirit is perfectly conscious that it is ever the same, that it is no other to-day than it was yesterday. Though concentrated within itself, and withdrawn from the world of sense, and in consequence deprived for the time of the mediums through which it com-

municates with the outer world, the spirit lives and is active.

Dreams are a proof of the continued activity of the spirit during sleep. At whatever hour we may be awakened out of sleep, we are conscious of having dreamt, or when this is not the case, it is because the remembrance of the dream is obliterated by the strong impressions which are produced on the sudden re-awakening of the senses. And though on such occasions we may have no distinct recollection of our dreams, we have, nevertheless, a clear impression that on being awakened we have to turn our attention forcibly away from what was inwardly occupying it, to the outward objects which then lay claim to it.

In our dreams we are conscious of perceptions, desires, and feelings ; but the outward senses being, as it were, closed, the spiritual activity goes on independently of outward objects. It rarely leaves a strong and lasting impression on the memory ; nevertheless, it has taken place. Spirit and soul are consequently active, even though we may not afterwards be able to remember the nature of their activity. Indeed, who can remember all the countless but fleeting ideas, that rise in the mind every moment of the day ? But would we, therefore, maintain that our spirit, at the very time when it was perhaps most active and reflective, had no ideas ?

In dreams, the self-consciousness of the spirit, that is to say, its knowledge of its own existence, is exactly the same as in waking life. In dreaming, as when awake, it distinguishes itself from the objects of its perception. Without this self-consciousness, without this insulation, so to say, of the *ego* from the images of its own conceptions, it could not dream.

Whenever we are able to recall to mind a past dream, we shall find that it was our *ego* which, with full consciousness of itself, lived and moved among the creations of its imagination. We may forget the various details of a dream, and even the entire dream, during which the impressions produced by the spirit on the sleeping body, through desires and feelings, were not very strong ; consequently we may also forget that the spirit was conscious of itself during the interval ; but it does not follow from this that our self-consciousness, the spirit's knowledge of its own identity and existence, has for a moment ceased ! There are persons who, even when merged in deep thought during their waking hours, become perfectly unconscious of what is going on around them. The mind, withdrawn from the outward parts of the body and the senses, is concentrated in itself, and occupied with itself alone ; to all appearance these persons, at such moments, seem to be dreaming or sleeping with open eyes. But who will deny that, during these periods of deep thought, they are fully conscious of themselves, though they hear not with their ears and see not with their eyes ? The very fact that we are able, when we are determined so to do, to awaken ourselves from sleep at a fixed hour, is another proof in favor of the continuance of our self-consciousness, and of the consciousness of our existence.

We cannot therefore say of a person, whether in light slumber or in deep sleep, that he has lost consciousness, for he retains the knowledge of his own existence, though he does not make it known to us. The spirit never loses the consciousness of its own being, and the soul never loses the consciousness of its identity, although when they return to the

sphere of the outward senses, they may have lost the remembrance of having retained this in their sleeping state. The same takes place during a swoon, when in consequence of the partial and temporary disturbance of the plant-life, the spiritual part of man withdraws into itself; for the spirit shuns what is dead and is only bound to substances which are in themselves lifeless by the bond of the vital force. Although a person in a swoon gives no sign of self-consciousness, he is, nevertheless, as little without it as when asleep. Indeed, many persons on recovering from a swoon remember ideas which have occupied them during the period of apparent lifelessness, just as many, on awaking from sleep, remember their dreams, while others do not. Nay, there are physical conditions, such, for instance, as those of catalepsy, during which the body presents a pale, cold, breathless, motionless, rigid appearance, like that of a corpse; while the spirit, nevertheless, remains in connection with some of the senses, and is perfectly cognizant of all that goes on around it, but is unable to give the slightest outward sign of life or consciousness.

There is another remarkable condition incident to human nature, which convinces us of the uninterrupted activity of the spirit, and of its never-ceasing consciousness, even during periods of which it subsequently loses the remembrance. I allude to the condition of the sleep-walker. He falls, to all appearances, into the ordinary state of sleep. His outward senses are closed. He hears not, sees not, feels not. Suddenly he seems to awake, not out of sleep, but in it. He hears, but not with his ears; he sees, but not with his eyes; he feels, but not through the skin. He walks, he speaks, he performs various acts, and,

to the utter astonishment of the spectators, often with greater skill and precision than he would be capable of when awake. In this state he has a vivid recollection of the events which have taken place during his waking life, and not unfrequently, indeed, of occurrences which entirely escape his memory when his senses are fully awake. After having remained in this state for some time, he sinks again into ordinary sleep, and when at length he rouses himself from this, he is perfectly unconscious of everything that has taken place. He has forgotten what he said and what he did, and often finds it impossible to believe what those who have seen his sleep-walking tell him. But can we deny that his spirit has been self-conscious, and wonderfully active, during that sleep? When the somnambulist falls again into that state of outward sleeping and inward waking, he remembers while in this condition, which even to himself is incomprehensible, all that he did and thought, when previously in it, and of which, when his outward senses are awake, he knows nothing.

How is this to be explained? How is it that when asleep, when the outward senses are, so to say, closed, we nevertheless, in such cases as the one just alluded to, can hear and see not only as well, but better than when awake? It is because the body is nothing more than the outward shell or covering of the spirit; because in itself the body, independently of the soul, possesses neither the power of sensation nor perception, the eye of the soulless body being as sightless as that of a marble statue. It is consequently the soul, and the soul alone, that feels, sees, and hears what is going on outwardly. The eye, the ear, etc., are only special arrangements in the fleshly covering, skillfully

adapted for conveying impressions from the outer world to the soul. There are, however, instances, as we have seen, in which the gross bodily covering being diseased, and having become injured in some way, the soul, as it were, comes forth from it, and continues its activity without the aid of the outward senses. In these cases it also acts upon an entirely different set of nerves than when the body is in its ordinary waking state; and through the increased vegetative force in these, it carries on its action against that which is in itself lifeless in man.

The soul is consequently the sensitive organ, not the body, and is therefore the true and real body of the spirit, and the body is only its outward framework, its shell and covering. Now, as we know from numerous instances and experiences that the activity and self-consciousness of the spirit never cease, not even during the moments in respect to which it may not be able to remember having been self-conscious; as we know, that when engaged in deep meditation the spirit may become unconscious of its own body and of all outward circumstances, or in certain diseases may be capable of acting on the members of the body, or, as in cases of somnambulism, is even capable of entirely dispensing with the aid of the bodily senses: there is no difficulty in conceiving how the immortal spirit, even after having entirely thrown off its gross and perishable body, can retain its self-consciousness and the feeling of its identity, though it can no longer manifest itself through the medium of the body to those who are still living in the flesh! We are thus able to conceive what is the *spiritual* body of which St. Paul speaks; what is the incorruption which is to rise out of corruption; what is the

weakness that falls off, or is sown in the grave, and is raised in power, and soars towards heaven, being mature for the better life. (1 Cor. xv. 43.) This, then, is the glorification after death ; this is the spiritual resurrection. That which is born of the earth must return to the earth ; but the spirit, invested with the glorified body, bears the image of the heavenly, as it has borne the image of the earthly. (1 Cor. xv. 49.) The fleshly body, given over to corruption in the grave, feels no more ; but in reality it has never felt through itself alone. It was the spiritual body, that is, the soul, which in truth felt and perceived ; and it will continue to do so even though dissevered from its earthly shell. Its power of feeling and perception will indeed be enhanced ; and the spirit, continuing its self-conscious life in the spiritual body, will still see the glory of God in his creation, and will recognize and love the beings it loved before. But it will no longer have sensual or earthly wants and desires, and it will know no tears ; it will bear the image of the heavenly from whence it descends.

What shall I feel, when Thou callest me, O my Creator, my God ! When the time of my glorification shall arrive ; when my living friends are weeping around me ; when my glorified dear ones are drawing nigh ; and my heart blesses all with equal love ! When I shall appear before Thee, sanctified through Jesus Christ, and having become a partaker of his kingdom, I will seek Him and will fall down before Thee, O Lord, and pray to Thee with increased thankfulness, with deeper reverence and awe, that my immortal spirit may ever ripen to greater perfection in every virtue ! Amen.

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